Cricket Fifth Cornhill Test: England v South Africa

Victory ends England's long drought

David Hopps at Headingley

FOR once nobody can misrepresent England's cricketers as little better than a national joke. For once nobody can pronounce that Test cricket in England has already entered its death throes. For once — and it is quite a turn-up to be able to declare it after 12 years without a series victory — the England cricket team can declare themselves to be winners.

"A little disdain is not amiss; a little scorn is alluring." So wrote William Congreve in The Way Of The World nearly 300 years ago. That has been the way of the world for English cricket for too long; briefly encouraging, often inept, a delightful invitation to ridicule. In its way, so very English.

That perception has been weakened, if not yet reversed, because England, with their deplorable record on tour, must go to Australia this winter. And as Hansie Cronje, South Africa's captain, pointed out: "It is winning away from home that really boosts your reputation."

But it took 28 minutes on Monday to make a start. South Africa, entering the final day at 185 for eight, were dismissed for 195, leaving England victors by 23 runs. Angus Fraser had Allan Donald caught at the wicket from the merest sliver of an outside edge, and Darren Gough completed his best Test figures, six for 42, by having Makhaya Ntini out lbw.

There is no magic formula for England's victory in this series. It is the reward for several years' striving by up to a dozen key individuals. But Alec Stewart, whose appointment to the captaincy in the spring was deemed to be a stopgap, will deserve the recognition he receives.



Champagne moment . . . Gough lets success go to his head as celebrations start PHOTO: LAURENCE GRIFFITHS

Stewart brushes aside excuses and soft thinking as he brushes dust from his shoes. His conviction that English cricket must toughen up is hardly a unique insight. It is shared by the collection of senior players — Mike Atherton (England's Man of the Series), Nasser Hussain, Graham Thorpe, Fraser and Gough — who have committed themselves so intensively to breaking the mould.

To emphasise, however, that England's advancement has been a team effort, one only has to consider the turning point in the series. In the third Test at Old Trafford, South Africa led by 369 runs on first innings and with nearly two days remaining looked certain to go 2-0 up in the series.

The recovery was begun by Atherton and Stewart, both aware that another England crisis loomed. Had either fallen cheaply, this summer would have ended with the usual bout of recriminations. Instead they remained in a stand of 226, and Robert Croft's unbeaten 37 in three hours scraped a draw.

If Stewart was assisted by Atherton at Old Trafford, Headingley provided another symbolic moment in the shape of Hussain, who toiled for more than seven hours for 94. When Hussain was dismissed on Sunday he punched the boundary rail in distress not at a lost Test hundred but that he might not have carried the job through. Thanks to the dependability of Fraser and yes, these days, the dependability of Gough, too, he had done enough.

Stewart won the toss and chose to bat. The highlight of the opening day was Butcher's maiden century. While wickets around him tumbled, he went on to make a gutsy 116. But the tourists passed England's first innings total, thanks to a patient 57 from Hansie Cronje.

If Hussain was the hero of England's second innings, Butcher, Stewart and Ramprakash also made useful contributions.

Comment, page 12

Scoreboard

ENGLAND First Innings

M A Butcher b Pollock	116
M A Atherton c Kallis b Ntini	16
N Hussain c Boucher b Pollock	9
A J Stewart c Kallis b Donald	15
M R Ramprakash c Boucher b Donald	21
G A Hick c Rhodes b Ntini	2
A Flintoff c Liebenberg b Pollock	0
D G Cork not out	24
I D K Salisbury b Ntini	0
D Gough c McMillan b Ntini	2
A R C Fraser c Cullinan b Donald	4
Extras (b4, lb5, w2, nb10)	21
Total (83.3 overs)	230

Fall of wickets: 45, 83, 110, 181, 198, 198, 198, 200, 213

Bowling: Donald 20.3-6-44-3; Pollock 24-8-51-3; Ntini 21-5-72-4; Kallis 9-4-30-0; McMillan 9-0-24-0.

SOUTH AFRICA First Innings

G Kirsten lbw b Fraser	6
G F J Liebenberg c Hick b Fraser	21
J H Kallis c Ramprakash b Cork	40
D J Cullinan c Stewart b Gough	27
W J Cronje lbw b Fraser	57
J N Rhodes c Stewart b Gough	32
B M McMillan c Salisbury b Cork	7
S M Pollock c Salisbury b Fraser	31
M V Boucher c Atherton b Gough	6
A A Donald lbw b Fraser	0
M Ntini not out	4
Extras (lb20, nb1)	21
Total (90.3 overs)	252

Fall of wickets: 17, 36, 83, 120, 163, 184, 237, 242, 242

To bat: M Ntini.

Bowling: Gough 24.3-7-58-3; Fraser 25-10-42-5; Cork 21-3-72-2; Flintoff 8-1-31-0; Salisbury 3-0-6-0; Butcher 9-4-23-0.

ENGLAND Second Innings

M A Butcher c McMillan b Pollock	37
M A Atherton lbw b Donald	1
A J Stewart c Boucher b Pollock	35
M R Ramprakash lbw b Pollock	25
N Hussain c Cronje b Pollock	94
I D K Salisbury c Boucher b Pollock	4
G A Hick c Kirsten b Donald	1
A Flintoff c Boucher b Donald	0
D G Cork c Boucher b Donald	10
D Gough c Cullinan b Donald	5
A R C Fraser not out	1
Extras (b14, lb1, w2, nb10)	27
Total (110.2 overs)	240

Fall of wickets: 2, 81, 143, 200, 206, 207, 207, 229, 235.

Bowling: Pollock 35-14-53-5; Donald 29.2-9-71-5; McMillan 11-0-22-0; Ntini 15-4-43-0; Kallis 15-6-31-0; Cullinan 1-0-1-0; Cronje 4-1-4-0.

SOUTH AFRICA Second Innings

G Kirsten c Atherton b Gough	3
G F J Liebenberg lbw b Gough	6
J H Kallis lbw b Fraser	3
D J Cullinan lbw b Gough	0
W J Cronje c Stewart b Fraser	0
J N Rhodes c Flintoff b Gough	85
B M McMillan c Stewart b Cork	54
S M Pollock not out	28
M V Boucher lbw b Gough	4
A A Donald c Stewart b Fraser	4
M Ntini lbw b Gough	0
Extras (lb6, nb2)	8
Total (75 overs)	195

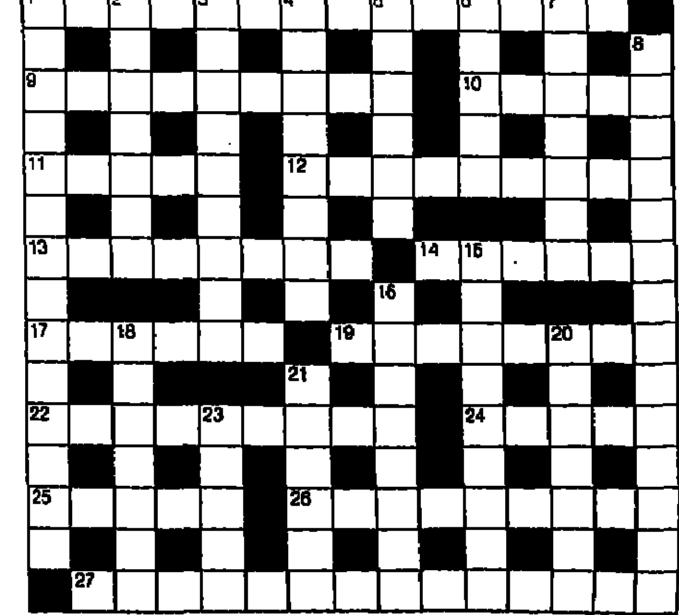
Fall of wickets: 9, 12, 12, 12, 27, 144, 167, 175, 194

Bowling: Gough 23-6-42-6; Fraser 23-8-50-3; Cork 17-1-50-1; Flintoff 4-0-13-0; Salisbury 8-0-34-0.

Umpires: Javed Akhtar and P Willey.

England won by 23 runs (Series 2-1)

Cryptic crossword by Janus



Across

1 A warning decree broadcast by philanthropist (6,8)
9 Well-known Archers' partisan wandering round hospital (9)
10 Queen introducing lady to returning sailor (5)
11 Not sparkling for all that (5)
12 Get off with bandleader in semi-dark? (9)
13 They compete for battered steel hat (8)
14 Prison officers' turns (6)
17 Member of an institution or fashionable team perhaps (6)
19 Relates to saint perturbed by traveller's return (8)
22 Back to front in the matter of poetry (2,7)
24 Bird seen on a Georgia motorway (5)
25 Writer turning over material (5)
26 Fungus attributable to modern kind of tools? (9)
27 Overestimated account from the bank (10,4)

Down

1 Where broadsheet gets on to bad lapse by French spouse (5,9)
2 Dancer making many shiver? (7)
3 Kentish king of the treble chance (9)
4 Manage to be in credit with dealer (8)
5 Soldier is in the way to put up a struggle (6)
6 Where doctors come up to record (5)
7 Repeat it with hesitation at tea-break (7)
8 "Boat on river will get in last!": message for Peggotty (6,2,6)
15 Emotional purification for Christian heretics is the end (9)
16 Are involved in bad dream about rum (8)
18 Bird having one drink (7)
20 She is on a rocky road (7)
21 Hole in old wine-bowl (6)
23 Plant bringing animal doctor distinction (5)

Last week's solution

R		F		D		D		G		S		S		B
O	P	E	R	A	T	I	O	N		H	Y	E	N	A
T		T		T		S		O		O		W		T
A	C	C	O	U	N	T		M	A	W	K	I	S	H
T		H		M		R		I		P		N		I
I	B	I	D		C	A	T	C	H	I	N	G	O	N
O		N		N		I				E				G
N	E	G	L	E	C	T		A	C	C	L	A	I	M
O				W				L		E		L		A
F	A	I	R	M	I	N	D	E	D		A	L	E	C
C		N		A		E		R		S		S		H
R	E	F	E	R	E	E		T	R	I	P	O	L	I
O		A		K		D		I		E		U		N
P	E	N	C	E		L	A	N	D	V	A	L	U	E
S		T		T		E		G		E		S		S

Surrey tighten their grip

Rob Steen

IF CHICKENS are not yet being counted, the coops are close to chock-a-block. Saqlain Mushtaq's latest masterclass in artfulness brought Derbyshire to their knees at The Oval and Surrey their eighth victory of the County Championship campaign — two more than any rival and already as many as Glamorgan managed in taking last season's pennant.

With four games to go and second-placed Leicestershire trailing by 41 points with a game in hand, the words "in", "the" and "bag" must be sorely difficult to resist.

Saqlain's success there has turbo-charged Surrey's seemingly irresistible challenge for their first title since decimalisation. The 11 Derbyshire wickets he claimed in this latest victory were this notional off-spinner's third such haul this season. The Scores: Surrey 333 and 238 for 9 dec; Derbyshire 139 and 206.

County Championship table

	P	W	L	D	B	Bwl	Pts
Surrey	13	8	3	2	33	48	218
Leicestershire	12	6	0	6	27	31	172
Lancashire	12	6	1	5	21	38	170
Gloucestershire	11	6	4	1	10	42	151
Kent	12	5	2	5	14	42	151
Yorkshire	11	4	2	5	30	39	149
Sussex	12	4	4	4	23	44	149
Glamorgan	12	3	4	5	25	39	127
Hampshire	12	3	4	5	19	43	125
Notts	13	3	6	4	18	47	125
Warwickshire	12	3	6	3	22	42	121
Durham	12	3	6	3	18	45	120
Worcestershire	11	3	4	4	23	36	119
Somerset	11	3	5	3	21	30	108
Derbyshire	11	3	6	2	17	34	105
Middlesex	12	2	4	6	21	33	104
Northants	11	2	2	7	22	28	103
Essex	12	2	6	4	13	41	86

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The Washington Post

Omagh suspects detained

Jonathan Freedland and John Mullin in Belfast

THE British and Irish governments moved to tighten the noose around those responsible for the car bomb in Omagh, Northern Ireland, which killed 28 people last Saturday, arresting five men in dawn raids near the scene of the blast and threatening measures to put republican hardliners behind bars.

The UK Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam, announced a possible change in the law, making it easier to jail members of illegal organisations. They include the Real IRA, the splinter group widely blamed for the weekend bomb in the County Tyrone market town, the worst act of violence in the 30 years of the Troubles. She added that a return to the policy of internment had not been ruled out.

"These people just aren't human, they're animals," Ms Mowlam said on the steps of Stormont House on Monday night, after talks with Ireland's justice minister, John O'Donoghue. "We are going to leave no stone unturned . . . to make sure these people are taken off the streets."

Responding to growing frustration that the individuals believed to be behind the Real IRA are well known and yet remain free, Ms Mowlam explained that existing law made it hard to convict members of proscribed groups.

London and Dublin were assessing the legal implications of loosening the rules by allowing the word of a single senior police officer to count as sufficient proof of membership of an illegal organisation.

The two ministers were briefed by the chief constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, Ronnie Flanagan, and his Irish counterpart, the Gardai Commissioner, Pat Byrne. The police chiefs agreed a range of steps designed to beef up security in border areas.

The security forces arrested five men early on Monday in raids on homes at Mount Joy, just outside Omagh, and in the neighbouring village of Sixmilecross. All were taken to Belfast for questioning.

One of the arrested men was Shane Mackey, aged 19, whose father Francie, an Omagh councillor of 15 years standing, is aligned with the 32 County Sovereignty Movement, the hardline republican group assumed to be the political wing of the Real IRA.

A mother and daughter grieve in Omagh PHOTOGRAPH: DYLAN MARTINEZ

Although MI5 and the RUC see the groups as one and the same, those public figures identified with the political movement were anxious to distance themselves from 100 renegades of the Real IRA in the wake of the massacre.

Bernadette Sands-McKevitt, vice-chair of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement, refused to comment, referring reporters to the organisation's statement, issued in Dublin. It read: "We share the grief and sorrow of everyone of the island of Ireland and we offer our sincerest sympathy to the injured and bereaved and their family and friends at this moment in time."

Special Branch detectives have several leading dissident republicans under surveillance. Among them is Michael McKevitt, Bernadette's partner. The couple attended the funeral in Dublin three months ago of Ronan MacLochlain, aged 27, a father of three. He was the Real IRA's first martyr, shot dead in a failed armed robbery of a security van in Co Wicklow.

Also there was Francie Mackey, chairman of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement. He was expelled from Sinn Fein four months ago over his support for the renegade organisation. He is a psychiatric nurse at Tyrone County Hospital, where many victims of the Omagh bombing were taken.

Meanwhile the British Prime Minister's official spokesman was at pains to distinguish between the Provisional IRA, along with Sinn Fein, and the extremists behind the bombing, whom he dismissed as a "rump" which would be taken on and beaten.

Observers said Sinn Fein's swift condemnation of the bombing — its leader, Gerry Adams, was unequivocal when he said: "I reiterate my total condemnation of this action" — had hugely boosted its status in the eyes of the British government, locking in its position as a key player in the peace process and implementation of the Good Friday agreement.

Northern Ireland's First Minister and leader of the Ulster Unionist party, David Trimble, called for patience, acknowledging that some republicans, too, were outraged by the attack.

Tornado of violence, page 9
Comment, page 12

Clinton admits to sex with Lewinsky

Martin Kettle in Washington

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton threw himself and the future of his presidency on the mercy of the American people in an emotional public broadcast on Monday night after he admitted under oath to an "inappropriate" relationship with Monica Lewinsky that he had previously denied.

In a national broadcast on television following a day in which he gave four hours of detailed and frequently intimate evidence in answer to questions from the independent counsel, Kenneth Starr, and his team of prosecutors, Mr Clinton said his earlier denials of an affair were "legally accurate", but that he did have a relationship that was "inappropriate" and "wrong".

In a phrase which his enemies will exploit to the full, Mr Clinton called the affair "a critical lapse in judgment and a personal failure", and said he was solely responsible for the earlier deception. "I misled people, including even my wife. I deeply regret that." But "at no time did I ask anyone to lie or to hide or to destroy evidence, or to take any other unlawful action", he said.

Seeking to stave off possible impeachment proceedings, he said part of the reason he did not come forward earlier was to save himself from embarrassment, and because of his mistrust of Mr Starr's investigation. Now it was time to move on. "This [investigation] has gone on too long and cost too much and hurt too many people."

Mr Clinton said he wanted to reclaim his family life with "the two people I love most, my wife and my daughter", and appealed for privacy. "Even presidents have private lives," he said.

His personal lawyer, David Kendall, said Mr Clinton had refused to answer "a very few highly intrusive questions" during the earlier interrogation by Mr Starr at the White House, which was carried by a closed-circuit television link to the grand jury in a nearby federal courthouse.

After the president had finished giving evidence, Mr Starr reserved his right to call Mr Clinton to testify again.

Mr Kendall said Mr Clinton had responded truthfully to Mr Starr's questions over the relationship with Ms Lewinsky when she was a 21-year-old White House intern.

The dramatic proceedings stunned Washington and left White House aides and staff, as well as Democratic party activists, dismayed at the change in Mr Clinton's story that he had never had sexual relations with Ms Lewinsky.

Congress is now bracing itself for a marathon political battle over the long-awaited report by Mr Starr.

The report is likely to allege that Mr Clinton committed perjury when he denied an affair with Ms Lewinsky, now aged 25, while under oath during the Paula Jones case in January. If so, it would necessitate hearings on Capitol Hill later in the autumn and throw the issue into the centre of the mid-term election political arena.

At a meeting of White House senior staff on Monday morning Mr Clinton's chief of staff, Erskine Bowles, stressed "the importance of sticking together" and told colleagues: "It's easy to be there for someone when they're up. But it's the good ones who are there for you when you're down."

A glimpse of the private torment of the Clinton family came when the Rev Jesse Jackson told reporters that he had been summoned to the White House on Sunday night, two days before Mr Clinton's 52nd birthday, at the request of the president's daughter, Chelsea, for meetings with Hillary Clinton and the president.

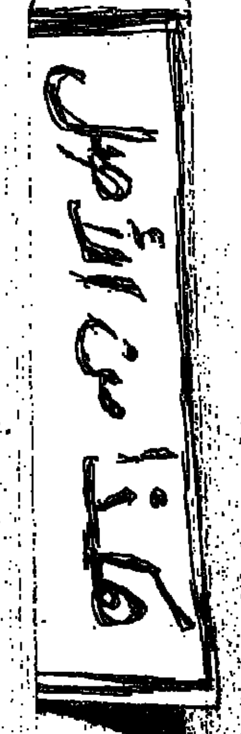
"He is embarrassed by whatever happened — however one defines inappropriate — and Hillary has had to face the humiliation of it all," Mr Jackson said. "But they are in love and their marriage will survive this."

Senior Republicans warned that impeachment proceedings could follow if Mr Starr were to report that Mr Clinton did commit perjury and refused to resign.

Senator John Ashcroft, a presidential aspirant from Missouri, said Congress could not ignore what had already transpired. "If he has subverted the truth, if there are the serious crimes of perjury, the Congress has a responsibility to impeach," Mr Ashcroft said.

Washington Post, page 16

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 500	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3.80



Genetic modification will improve food security

I AM amazed at the scaremongering of James Meikle and John Vidal, implying how risky genetically modified (GM) crops are (Plan for a buffer zone to isolate gene crops, July 19). New plant varieties are always carefully tested, irrespective of whether they are developed by traditional breeding, by genetic modification or imported. GM crops are not more risky simply because they are made by genetic modification. Wide-reaching claims, such as the one that certain species of birds are threatened by GM crops, need to be based on scientific fact. Many species of birds have become rare because of the destruction of their natural habitats, intensive agriculture, expansion of cities, roads, etc, and not because farmers planted one particular variety of a crop rather than another.

There would be no farming without plant breeding: new plant varieties have been essential for agriculture throughout its 10,000-year history. What is new today is that the tools of molecular biology allow a more directed plant breeding than was possible with traditional crops. Genetic modification will make valuable contributions to more sustainable agriculture and to improved world food security.

World-wide, GM crops are grown on about 20 million hectares today. Plants can be made more resistant to insects so the farmer needs to use less insecticide — this has already been achieved with maize and potatoes. Many virus-resistant crops have also been developed through genetic modification, and there is every reason to expect such crops will be widely used in the future.

Richard Braun,
Worb, Switzerland

HAS anyone given any thought to the effect of genetically modified potatoes on seed-eating birds? Insect-eating birds could also be endangered. At the moment we still have a choice as to whether or not to spray crops with toxic chemicals in order to kill insects. If crops are modified we will no longer have even that choice.

Before it is too late, can we not give some thought to the necessity of sharing this planet with other species? The argument in favour of genetic modification is that unless we take this path we will not be able to feed the grossly enlarged future human population. Perhaps it would be better to modify the expected increase in the number of humans.

S J Goddard,
Stockbridge, Hants

THE discovery that genetically modified food damages the immune systems of rats (Calls for genetic food ban rejected, August 16) comes as no surprise to me. If ever there was a case for a UK referendum, this is it.

The profound influence food has on the human organism is under the control of nature, and nature alone. Science still does not know all the ingredients in foods. More frightening still is that science does not know fully how food interacts within the system. Nature does.

Every cell in our body uses food to repair and replenish tissue. Genetic tampering will, therefore, affect the very intra-cellular structure of our bodies. The long-term effects of such dietary abomination will not show for another generation, and by then it will be too late. Drug companies try to argue that their tampering will make for better crop yield but they are only pursuing profits. Don't fall for this claptrap — it is gambling with our children's health.

Alan Hunter,
Edinburgh

Why pigs won't save our bacon

THE announcement of new UK guidelines on xenotransplantation (August 9) may have given the impression that animal-to-human transplants will be saving human lives in the imminent future. But hype and hope have obscured the fact that the obstacles to xenotransplantation ever becoming a clinical therapy are enormous.

The unpredictable consequences of the introduction of genetically modified pig tissue into living human subjects and, in particular, the risk of novel infectious diseases being introduced to the human population as a result of animal-to-human virus transfer, overshadow all consideration of this matter.

Animal and human organs differ in many ways: in their production of hormones; in their rates of filtration, secretion and absorption of electrolytes, enzymes, and other chemical substances; in their physical structure; and their expected longevity. Any one of these could prove an insurmountable obstacle.

The implication now that a cure to the shortage of organs for transplant is only a few animal experiments away raises premature, and almost certainly false, hope. Xenotransplantation is not a panacea: it is speculative, potentially dangerous, and more a product of the financial high-risk, high-reward principles of commercial biotechnology than a considered and prudent response to the organ shortage.

Alistair Currie,
Sheffield

Rape victims are a special case

DEA Birkett's argument (Women must face their attackers, August 16) that the proposals about rape trials in the Home Office's report, Speaking Up For Justice, amount to special treatment for women is wrong on two counts. First, the provisions would apply in cases of male rape — rape is no longer a gender-specific crime. Second, the proposals about rape trials are a small part of a much wider project to look at the place and treatment of witnesses, and especially those who may be intimidated.

Judges have the right to intervene to prevent the badgering of witnesses, but most exercise this power with considerable caution. As a result rape victims spend a third more time in the witness box than victims of other serious assaults. To place one's faith in the judiciary means more women describing their experiences as "like a second rape" and the continuation of the present situation where fewer than one woman in 10 reporting rape sees her attacker convicted.

Kate Cook,
Campaign to End Rape
Gill Tishler,
Chief executive, Young Women's Christian Association of GB

SPEAKING Up For Justice simply makes the same point made 20 years ago by the Heilbron report, which was endorsed in the Sexual Offences Amendment Act (1976): that cross-examination about the complainants' sexual history should only be introduced when relevant. The problem is that the introduction of such evidence was left to the discretion of the judges, the very group that was allowing its introduction in the first place. Without training or monitoring of trials, judges have continued in their old ways, and research has shown that the introduction of sexual history evidence goes far beyond the interest of relevance to the issues in the trial.

Canada, Australia and the United States have all restricted such evidence. In Britain it is used in an attempt to discredit the victim's character. This is leading to serial rapists getting away with rape again and again. Dea Birkett ignores the fact that since 1976 the conviction rate for reported rapes has dropped, from 37 per cent to 9 per cent.

(Prof) Sue Lees,
University of North London

Shades of McCarthyism

JANE Barrett's defence of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (August 16) only confirms its weaknesses. Of course, interesting and illuminating evidence was given. But what concerns friends of South Africa — and I was banned from the country for 10 years for my anti-apartheid journalism — is the damage that was done to the basic tenets of justice.

The commission turned self-incrimination into a public duty and abandoned the initial principle that submissions should be voluntary: the courts were used to force individuals to give evidence. It also laid down that amnesty would only be recommended if the commission was satisfied a "full confession" had been given — in plain English, naming names. Innocence could be bought at the cost of incriminating others. The commission, in its evangelical naivety, embraced the flaws of both Stalin's show trials and McCarthyism.

Chris Jones,
St Albans, Herts

Tiny's sense of honour

YOUR obituary of Tiny Rowland (August 2) gives the impression that he was a fascist. Although Tiny did join the Hitler Youth in his early teens, he also was jailed for eight weeks in Berlin in 1939 for associating with anti-Nazis.

Tiny enlisted in the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1940 and served in Norway. When his parents, who had lost their business interests in Germany because of their anti-Nazi sentiments, were interned on the Isle of Man, Tiny refused to continue in the RAMC. He was discharged and interned with his parents.

From 1970 to 1976 I represented the 49 per cent North American interests in the Lonrho-controlled Western Platinum mine in South Africa. Frequently the views I presented were in conflict with those of Tiny, but throughout our many arguments I found Tiny always straightforward and honourable.

James Holmes,
Oakville, Ontario, Canada

Briefly

HOWEVER "undesirable" he may be in some people's eyes, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, the president of the Democratic Republic of Congo, is surely entitled to be called his full name in the English-language media. Yet we find him consistently referred to on the BBC and in respectable newspapers as "Laurent" Kabila. France's interior minister, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, is never called "Jean"; and the late minister-president of Bavaria, Franz-Josef Strauss, would have been enraged to hear himself referred to as just "Franz".

The truncating of Kabila's name is unpleasantly reminiscent of the way the US immigration authorities used to change the spelling of European names they found "unpronounceable".

Peter Graham,
Mourjou, France

AS A British volunteer working in Macedonia I would take issue with Jonathan Steele's article ("Macedonia accused of ethnic abuses", August 2).

While things may not be perfect, Albanians do have representation and basic civil rights. To suggest that not allowing the mayors of Gostivar and Tetevo to fly the flag of another sovereign state over their town halls is a denial of equal rights seems to me to be taking things too far. If the mayor of Londonderry were to raise the flag of the Irish Republic above his town hall and pledge support for a united Ireland, would this be tolerated in the United Kingdom?

Clive Whiting,
Skopje, Macedonia

I WAS nine years old when they hanged Derek Bentley (Conviction quashed, August 9) and I was struck even at that age by the manifest unfairness of his conviction and repulsed by the obscene ritual of his execution. It would be a fitting memorial if, once and for all, calls for the return of capital punishment were ended. It would also be welcome if the decision was a sign that, at long last, Britain's Court of Appeal recognised that public confidence in the judicial system is strengthened when mistakes are acknowledged and rectified rather than buried.

Campbell J Malone,
Salford

ISN'T it a bit odd that the anti-gay/pro-marriage bigotry emanating from the Lambeth Conference (August 16) should come from people following the example of a confirmed bachelor whose companions were 12 chaps of a similar persuasion plus a prostitute?

W Thomson,
London

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Dutch troops admit role in Srebrenica massacre

Ian Traynor in Bonn

THE Serb slaughter of thousands of Bosnian Muslims after Srebrenica fell in 1995 returned to haunt the Dutch armed forces and politicians last weekend as former peacekeepers in the enclave told how their unit may have killed dozens of Muslim fighters and helped the Serbs separate the victims for execution.

Members of the 435-strong Dutch battalion which served in the east Bosnian town alleged that the government had covered up their role in the fall of th[illegible] and photographic evidence had been destroyed and a confidential report on the activities of the peacekeepers had been suppressed.

Frank De Grave, the defence minister, ordered an immediate judicial inquiry into the claims. Last weekend MPs from all parties demanded a parliamentary inquiry into Dutch conduct in Srebrenica in July 1995.

Thousands of Muslim men were hunted down and murdered by Serb forces under General Ratko Mladic in the single worst atrocity of the three-year Bosnian war. The Red Cross is still seeking information on the whereabouts of 7,380 men.

Gen Mladic and his political boss, Radovan Karadzic, have been indicted for genocide by the Internationa[illegible] War [illegible] Tribunal on Former Yugoslavia, also based in The Hague.

On July 11, the day the enclave fell to the Serbs, a Dutch armoured car came up against a group of 30 armed Muslim men trying to flee, according to peacekeepers talking to television and the press last weekend.

An unnamed officer said that the Muslims refused to let the armoured car pass and that the commander ordered the driver to drive through the mêlée. Most of the fighters were run over and killed, the officer said.

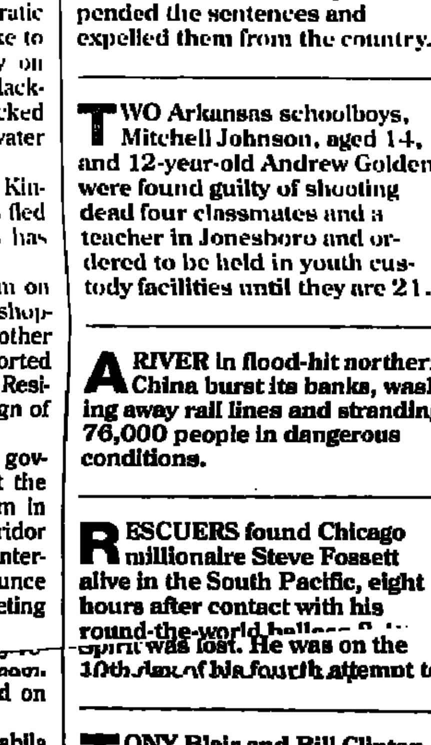
Lieutenant Ron Rutten, aged 38, who served with "Dutchbatt" in Srebrenica, said he filmed his colleagues helping the Serbs separate Muslim men from women and chil[illegible] the prelude to deportation and murder.

His video and film were presented to a 1995 Dutch inquiry which cleared the peacekeepers of doing anything wrong in Srebrenica. According to the government, the film was destroyed by mistake while being developed. Last week the war crimes tribunal in The Hague issued a 1995 report absolving the Dutch of any responsibility for Srebrenica.

Lt Rutten, who said he had filmed the corpses of nine Muslim men lying in a ditch after being shot by the Serbs, asked his colleagues why they were helping the Serbs to prepare their deportation. He was promptly sent back to base by his commanding officer.

He said the then defence minister, Joris Voorhoeve, was informed of this in 1995, and added that his testimony was "systematically" removed from the inquiry.

Questions about the Dutch conduct and how officials handled the crisis are mounting as more and more participants come forward to state publicly what they had previously revealed only in confidence.



Ziza Berisha, whose home in Glodjane, Kosovo, was burned by Serb forces. Her husband Rok is a leading member of the Kosovo Liberation Army PHOTOGRAPH: SEAMUS MURPHY

Shelling sparks Kosovo exodus

Jonathan Steele in Barane

THE stillness of the night is broken by the put-put of an approaching [illegible] of people traumatised by shell-fire, hoping for safety under cover of night, and desperate not to be left alone when everyone else is packing up.

Almost every Albanian in a large triangle of western Kosovo is on the road in what appears to be the biggest refugee movement of this year's war. Between 1am and 3am last Sunday night, 20 tractors and 10 heavily laden cars passed through Barane in a cavalcade of fear that is likely to be repeated on this and other back roads until the Serbs end their offensive.

"I don't know where we're going," said Shaban Gashi, who had left his home near Barane. "Wherever God sends us." His wife and teenage daughter were crammed into the cab beside him. A dozen other relatives huddled on the trailer behind.

"We'll just stay here. We don't know where to go. We're surrounded by the police. There's a wall around us," said Agim Ahmaxhekaj, a young man in the next village. Three more overcrowded tractors and a lorry full of refugees had stopped nearby.

The Serb police and Yugoslav army are pushing eastwards into the triangle from Pec in the north and Djakovica in the south, destroy[illegible] thousands of refugees are trying to escape the shelling. The eastern edge of the pocket into which they have been pushed is a range of hills with no exit except on foot.

"The Serbs usually shell one day as if to warn people to get out, and then come in with their tanks the next day to loot and burn," said a man in Barane.

The distant sound of shelling had convinced most of Barane's 2,000 inhabitants, as well as its hundreds of visitors, that it was next on the list. He and a few other men stayed behind to keep guard.

Refugees from villages near Pec said the Serbs used strike aircraft last weekend. In a clinic in the basement of a house lay a woman, eight months pregnant, who had been hit by shrapnel from an air-launched rocket or bomb. The doctor said 30 patients arrived that day.

The Serbs claim their offensive is a response to attacks by the independence-seeking Kosovo Liberation Army. But the KLA fighters in the area last week were too lightly armed to take on tanks.

The majority of refugees defended the KLA, but a few were critical. "If the KLA calls itself an army, they should have planes and tanks to match the Serbs. But they don't," said Nezir Bi[illegible] dren, he had slept on straw patted down on the concrete floor.

"We don't believe in the KLA much. It's not as big as it seems on TV," said a teacher of English.

Some may be disappointed with the KLA, but there has been a more striking — and pervasive — change in attitudes towards the West. When the Serb offensive launched the refugee crisis 10 weeks ago, it was hoped Nato would prove true to its tough talk of intervention. Now people feel betrayed and angry.

Nato's six-day air exercise which started in Albania this week is seen as a game.

As we talked to one family, the sound of an exploding shell caused a moment of silence as everyone waited for another. Then children burst into tears and an elderly man shouted; "I don't want to run any ore, I've nowhere to run to."

Our Albanian interpreter was deeply affected. She had never been out of Pristina to the war zones. As we left the last of the campsites, she said: "These people are in the hands of God. No one else cares."

Martin Walker, page 6

Congo rebels advance on Kinshasa

Arthur Malu-Malu in Kinshasa

THE capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo awoke to another day without electricity on Tuesday, with a major power blackout blamed on Rwandan-backed rebels disrupting fuel and water supplies.

As rebel units advanced on Kinshasa, hundreds of Westerners fled the capital. The United States has temporarily closed its embassy.

The city itself remained calm on Tuesday, with residents out shopping as usual for food and other basics, but witnesses reported fewer vehicles on the streets. Residents said there was no real sign of unusual military activity.

President Laurent Kabila's government, which conceded that the rebels held the giant Inga dam in the strategic Congo river corridor leading to the sea, urged the international community to denounce Rwanda for invading and targeting civilians.

"The international com[illegible] minister, Didier Mumengi, said on Monday.

The whereabouts of Mr Kabila himself, who left for the southern city of Lubumbashi early on Monday amid speculation that he was seeking military help from neighbouring Angola and other friends in the region, were not immediately clear.

He accuses former allies Rwanda and Uganda, who helped him oust veteran dictator Mobutu Sese Seko last year, of fighting alongside ethnic Tutsi and other rebels who took up arms in the east on August 2.

Mr Kabila fell out with his former sponsors over ways of ensuring security and stability in Central Africa and protecting the status of Tutsis in Congo. Both Rwanda and Uganda deny his charges, though independent sources say that Rwandan forces are clearly involved in the latest revolt.

The rebels hold Goma, Bukavu and Uvira in the east. In the west, they hold Inga and towns further down the Congo river. They reported their forces close to Mbanza Ngungu, a military base 120km southwest of the capital. — *Reuters*

The Week

AFTER years of acrimonious negotiations, Jewish groups and Swiss banks reached agreement on an estimated $1.25 billion deal that will compensate thousands of Holocaust survivors and their relatives for their looted Nazi-era assets.

Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 16

ISRAEL has joined India and Pakistan in lifting its long-standing veto on international negotiations to end the production of fissile materials used for nuclear bombs.

A FEDERAL appeals court ruled that the United States food and drug administration does not have jurisdiction to regulate tobacco products, marking a major victory for tobacco companies.

Washington Post, page 16

A COURT in Burma sentenced 18 foreign activists to five years hard labour for handing out anti-government literature but immediately suspended the sentences and expelled them from the country.

TWO Arkansas schoolboys, Mitchell Johnson, aged 14, and 12-year-old Andrew Golden, were found guilty of shooting dead four classmates and a teacher in Jonesboro and ordered to be held in youth custody facilities until they are 21.

A RIVER in flood-hit northern China burst its banks, washing away rail lines and stranding 76,000 people in dangerous conditions.

RESCUERS found Chicago millionaire Steve Fossett alive in the South Pacific, eight hours after contact with his round-the-world balloon [illegible] Spirit was lost. He was on the 10th day of his fourth attempt to [illegible]

TONY Blair and Bill Clinton are planning an international launch of their "Third Way" ideology at a one-day conference in New York on September 21 with other world leaders.

TWO people died and many were hurt when police in Lesotho's capital Maseru fired on protesters opposed to the landslide election victory of the ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy in May.

A PALESTINIAN businessman, Walid al-Qawasmeh, died in [illegible] after spending two weeks in detention without trial. Human rights groups say his death forms part of a pattern of torture by which Yasser Arafat's police extort money.

ANDRE Weil, one of the greatest mathematicians of this century, has died aged 92.

Mubarak risks taking sides in Sudan war

ANALYSIS
David Hirst

THE Sudanese opposition, a broad coalition of African southerners and Arab Muslim northerners known as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), held a conference in Cairo last weekend to plan the next stage of its struggle against the Khartoum government.

It is the first time Egypt has hosted such a gathering, and it is another blow to the Sudanese leader Hassan al-Turabi and his National Islamic Front.

Reports in Cairo suggest that President Hosni Mubarak has decided to start playing a more active role in the affairs of Egypt's vast southern neighbour. He is alarmed by the worsening conditions there, including the widespread famine, the growing scale and complexity of the civil war, and above all the danger Sudan's territorial disintegration poses to Egypt's vital stake in the waters of the Nile.

In recent years Egypt has taken second place to others in relations with the NDA. Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda have supported the alliance's cross-border military operations, while the United States, Europe and the African states directly or indirectly involved in the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (Igad) have been promoting a peace process between Khartoum and the southern rebels of John Garang's Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

The NDA is mainly composed of the two traditionalist parties of the north — Sadiq al-Mahdi's Umma and Mohammed al-Mirghani's Khatimiya; various so-called "modern" forces, including communists and army officers; and the SPLA, which is by far the most important element militarily.

Before the conference opened, the three main opposition leaders — Mr Mahdi, Mr Mirghani and Colonel Garang — met President Mubarak, who stressed the "grave dangers" Sudan now faced.

The conference follows directly on the collapse of the latest round of talks, in Addis Ababa, between Khartoum and the SPLA.

Last year, in a "peace-from-within" deal with a group of southern leaders opposed to Col Garang, Khartoum accepted in principle the hitherto heretical notion of southern secession. But it appeared to be one thing for Khartoum to grant it to its own protégés, quite another to concede it to a leader of Col Garang's stature.

The Addis Ababa talks apparently broke down on an SPLA proposal to turn Sudan into a north-south confederation for a two-year transitional period, to be followed by a referendum on southern self-determination.

Evidently Cairo saw the talks' collapse as an opportunity to step in. Though generally on bad terms with Khartoum — which it has accused of sponsoring Islamist terrorists — it has been ambivalent about the NDA's military campaign, which has recently spread from the south to the Port Sudan and Kassala area of the north.

It has not been keen to throw its weight behind a movement which, far from seizing power in Khartoum, might dismember the country. Its nightmare is that control of the Nile's headwaters might fall into hostile hands. Egypt's support depends on assurances that the NDA will not countenance Sudan's break-up. Cairo needs such promises less from the NDA's northern members, who hold the same fears, than from Col Garang. His military strength makes him Sudan's key power-broker.

In public at least, Egypt got what it wanted. On only his second visit to Cairo since he took command of the SPLA in 1983, Col Garang said: "I want to assure everyone of our commitment to the unity of Sudan." But, he added, it must be "on a new basis".

The Khartoum newspaper al-Jumhuriyah said the Turabi government, angered by Egypt's new stance, was threatening to retaliate with a conference of Egypt's "armed (opposition) groups".



'If they were spindly white legs, would Uncle Sam's finest charge in to the rescue?' PHOTO: TOM STODDART/IPG

Unseen, they starve by the thousand

Victoria Brittain

A GREAT human tragedy is continuing to unfold across southern Sudan, unseen except in pockets where aid agencies fly into grassy airstrips with food and medicine for tens of thousands of people displaced by civil war between the Islamic government in Khartoum and the nomadic cattle herders of the south.

Never before have so many tens of thousands died. Cattle herds have been wiped out or stolen; schools, hospitals and villages razed to the ground by bombing from government planes, or torching by the indisciplined militias paid and armed by Khartoum. Women and children have been kidnapped and enslaved.

This grim situation is certain to worsen in the coming months and into 1999 because of late rain, poor harvests and the collapse of all infrastructure across the region during the war of the past 15 years.

Sudan's two halves are divided by culture and religion, but the current Islamic government of the north has enforced its traditional political dominance with a ruthless military campaign which has destroyed the rural economy of the more backward south.

The Sudan People's Liberation Army, led by Colonel John Garang, leads the resistance, but has split, with factions bought off by Khartoum.

With a precarious three-month ceasefire between the government and the SPLA, $1 million a day is being poured in as food aid, but still the people starve.

More than 100 people are dying every day in Ajiep, just one of the dozens of feeding centres at the epicentre of the famine in southern Sudan, where photographer Tom Stoddart flew in for two hours.

"I focused on the spindly black legs . . . I wondered what would happen if they were spindly white legs, would Uncle Sam's finest charge in with high technology to the rescue?" he asked.

The death rate in Ajiep is worse than even the Horn of Africa famine of 1984/85 which so shocked Bob Geldof that he started LiveAid, or the 1994 cholera epidemic among Rwandan refugees which nearly sparked a Western invasion.

"The situation in Ajiep is catastrophic," said Sophie Baguet, a nutritionist with Médecins Sans Frontières.

The death rate is 69 per 10,000 a day and 133 deaths per 10,000 for children under five. Two deaths per 10,000 a day is considered an emergency.

Comment, page 12
Pitiless war, page 23

Suzanne Goldenberg in Lahore

UNITED STATES envoys began leaving Pakistan this week, reducing to a skeleton Washington's diplomatic presence in a country once seen as a staunch ally.

A statement from the US embassy advised other Americans to join them, in the light of threats received after the extradition from Pakistan of a man suspected of involvement in the bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

So far Pakistan's reaction to the arrest of Mohammed Sadik Howaida, who arrived in Karachi on a flight from Nairobi on the day of the bombing, has been muted.

But the government's co-operation with Washington in the pursuit of terrorists has led to retaliation against Americans in the past, including the killing of four oil workers last November after a Pakistani, Mir Aimal Kasi, was convicted of shooting dead two agents outside the CIA headquarters.

Such risks are reflected in the eagerness with which the government announced that it had handed Mr Howaida to the Kenyan authorities rather than to US investigators.

Pakistani newspapers said Mr Howaida told interrogators that the embassy bombings were masterminded by Osama bin Laden, the Saudi militant princeling who has been given sanctuary in neighbouring Afghanistan.

The News said Mr Howaida was a Palestinian engineer, and had as many as six companions who had slipped past immigration officials with false passports. They travelled on to Afghanistan.

Mr Bin Laden and his entourage are said to be sheltering near Kandahar in southern Afghanistan, where he is treated as an honoured guest by the Islamic Taliban militia.

Mr Howaida aroused the suspicion of immigration officials because he did not match the details in his passport, which described the bearer as "a bearded man with substantial build". Mr Howaida is said to be clean-shaven and slight.

The Pakistani police said that under interrogation Mr Howaida, aged 32, confessed to designing and helping to build the bombs used at Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, which killed 257 people.

Meanwhile US officials said a Kenyan guard at the US embassy in Nairobi identified a photograph shown to him by the FBI as someone he had seen at the bombing. Some US newspapers said that it was one of Mr Bin Laden's known associates.

Using his family's fortune earned in the Middle East construction trade, Mr Bin Laden built up a private army of Islamic zealots in the early 1980s to fight the Russian occupation of Afghanistan. Since then he is reported to have financed a wide range of fundamentalist groups.

Mr Bin Laden is wanted by the US for questioning about several terrorist attacks on American outposts, including the bombing of barracks in Riyadh and Dhahran in Saudi Arabia in 1996, and the World Trade Centre in New York in 1993.

John Aglionby in Jakarta

THREE elderly members of the Indonesian Communist Party, who had each served more than 30 years in prison, were among 25 political prisoners freed on Monday to mark the country's Independence Day celebrations.

But there was little popular rejoicing in the country which has suffered most from Asia's economic crisis and which thousands have fled, fearing fresh social unrest.

Three months after President Suharto was forced to resign by public demand for reform, critics used the anniversary to highlight the government's continuing repression.

President B J Habibie refused to free the two most prominent detainees, the East Timorese separatist leader Jose Xanana Gusmao, and Budiman Sudjatmiko, the leader of the People's Democratic Party (PRD), who was imprisoned for undermining the state ideology.

Mr Gusmao, who received a four-month remission on his 20-year sentence, said on Monday in his Jakarta prison that the fact that more than half Indonesia's 200-odd political prisoners were still behind bars showed the government's opposition to reform. "If this really wants to call itself a regime of reform, then Mr Habibie has to release all political prisoners without preconditions," he said.

Mr Sudjatmiko said the political prisoners were being used as a bargaining tool with the international community.

While Mr Habibie led the official Independence Day ceremonies at the state palace, his opponents held their own. In west Jakarta, Megawati Sukarnoputri, the daughter of Indonesia's first president Sukarno, held a rally attended by thousands of her supporters.

A similar number met at the capital's Proclamation of Independence Park for the culmination of a three-day conference on democracy that bemoaned how little reform Mr Habibie has undertaken.

NZ coalition hits the rocks

Anthony Hubbard in Wellington

NEW ZEALAND'S odd-couple coalition government has blown apart amid scenes of anger and farce. The prime minister and leader of the National party, Jenny Shipley, has sacked her turbulent deputy, Winston Peters, after an extraordinary bust-up last week which saw the two openly quarrelling in parliament.

Then Mr Peters's hybrid party, New Zealand First (NZF), abruptly disintegrated, with half of its MPs walking out. It now appears that Mrs Shipley's National party will rule as a minority government with support from Mr Peters's deserters.

It was a spectacular end to the first New Zealand government elected under the German form of proportional representation known as Mixed Member Proportional (MMP). The National/New Zealand First coalition, formed after the 1996 election when MMP replaced the old Westminster-style electoral system, has stumbled from crisis to crisis.

There have always been enormous tensions between the free-market National party and the nationalist, populist New Zealand First. These bubbled over in the past week, when an argument over whether to sell Wellington airport grew into a full-blown battle of conflicting ideologies.

This in turn ignited the long-smouldering internal tensions in New Zealand First, a peculiar hybrid of Maori and European, liberal and conservative voters. Seven MPs left to become independents in this week's upheaval. The position of an eighth, Cabinet minister Peter McCardle, was unclear on Tuesday night, although Mrs Shipley said he, too, had decided to support her National government.

The seven or eight MPs would give Mrs Shipley a one- or two-seat majority in the 120-seat House of Representatives, while the new independent MPs seem likely to support her on issues of confidence and supply. She will have to win their support issue by issue on other legislation.

Her government is at the mercy of a highly diverse and unpredictable gaggle of independents. If Mrs Shipley found it difficult to work with New Zealand First, she will also find it hard to live with the deserters from Mr Peters's party.

The crisis began on August 12, when Mr Peters and four other NZF ministers walked out of Cabinet after an argument over the sale of the government's 66 per cent share in Wellington airport. National, which favours privatisation, was keen to sell. Mr Peters, who opposes the sale of "strategic" assets, wanted to ensure a majority of shares remained in the hands of New Zealanders.

The row over the airport was as nothing, however, compared with the scene in parliament the following day. Mr Peters told the House that, in effect, Mrs Shipley had double-crossed him in Cabinet by reneging on an informal deal to limit the Cabinet discussion to two sale options only. He also suggested that if the Opposition brought in legislation to overturn the sale, he would vote for it. Mrs Shipley, a fiercely buttoned-down politician, said icily that she had made no such deal.

It was a sight not seen in a New Zealand parliament in living memory — the leader of the country and her deputy alternately rising from their shared bench to denounce the other, and then sitting again in frozen silence, staring straight ahead.

The following day Mrs Shipley announced that the airport had been sold, in a deal backed by Mr Peters. Then, a couple of hours later, she sacked Mr Peters from Cabinet, where he had been not only deputy prime minister but the treasurer, effectively the senior finance minister.

Mr Peters had impugned her honesty, she said furiously: "I cannot be prime minister of this nation and have my integrity brought into question." He had also undermined the country's commercial reputation, she said, by threatening to vote against the sale of the airport.

Polls suggest that the opposition — the Labour party and the leftwing Alliance, which have recently cosied up together after years of bitter enmity — would easily win an election if it were called tomorrow.

Mrs Shipley, an opponent of MMP, is now calling for a referendum to replace it with the first-past-the-post system that used to govern New Zealand elections. Supporters of MMP say the bungling of the coalition government has given a good system a bad name. Whoever is right, it is clear that New Zealanders are disillusioned with proportional representation, just as they are disillusioned with their first MMP government.



Cross benchers . . . Shipley and Peters in parliament last week

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
August 23 1998

Show of force that won't save Kosovo

EUROPE THIS WEEK
Martin Walker

IT LOOKED almost like the real thing when a battalion of US marines was deployed in Albania this week. And it sounded like the real thing as Nato warplanes screamed overhead, just a throttle's push away from the still-smoking wreckage of the villages of Kosovo and the Serbian guns that torment them.

But it was just an exercise, the start of another week of Nato's confidence-building measures. This time Nato is teaching Albanian troops how to run a peacekeeping mission just like the professionals, while the real peacekeeping job across the Albanian border remains unfilled.

At Nato headquarters in Brussels last week they announced proudly that the air plan for intervention — required by Nato's secretary-general, Javier Solana, "to minimise collateral damage" (which means civilian casualties) — was now complete "with a full range of options". Nato forces could be in action within 18 hours of receiving their orders.

Nato's Supreme Commander, US General Wesley Clarke, has begun the process of force allocation, asking each Nato country how many warplanes and support forces it can provide. Germany has already offered its special squadron of electronic counter-measures Tornado aircraft, the key to nullifying Serbian anti-aircraft defences.

But like football teams hanging around for the referee's whistle, Nato's planners and troops are still waiting for their masters to take the political decision that may never come. To anyone who recalls the four years of Bosnian agony before the Croatian army offensive triggered the Dayton peace talks and the Nato peacekeeping mission, it all sounds gruesomely familiar.

The United States, whose contempt for some of its timorous European allies is now undisguised, has repeatedly said that by insisting on a United Nations Security Council mandate to intervene in Kosovo they are in effect handing the Russians a veto over Nato operations. This is precisely what Nato refused to permit when it negotiated its permanent joint council arrangement with the Russians.

US officials have confirmed to the Guardian that a special White House envoy had suggested to the Italian prime minister, Romano Prodi, that Italy once again convene "a coalition of the willing", as it did to send peacekeepers to stop the Albanian civil war a year ago. Mr Prodi declined, citing the need to maintain Nato solidarity.

After personal phone calls from President Clinton, both Britain's Tony Blair and Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl have indicated a readiness in principle to act without a new UN mandate. But the same call to Jacques Chirac was less productive, leaving France still insisting that Nato should act only with the Security Council's endorsement, which means Russian acquiescence.

French officials in Brussels counter that the Americans talk more fiercely than they act, noting an American suggestion that some of the US marines earmarked for Kosovo may not be available if US civilians have to be evacuated from the civil war in the Congo.

European diplomats also note that it was the US who began to hang back from a Kosovo operation when it began suspecting that the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) included organised criminal groups involved in smuggling as well as stout nationalists. Indeed the US is seriously concerned that Islamic fundamentalist volunteers from Iran and Afghanistan are joining their Muslim co-religionists in the KLA.

"The KLA is not helping," one Nato official commented last week on learning that the KLA was refusing to join the new five-man negotiating team put together by Kosovo's political leader, Ibrahim Rugova, to resume talks with the Belgrade government. These talks have been promoted by the US special envoy, Christopher Hill, and by Britain, whose officials drafted the new negotiating agenda based on a series of options for Kosovar autonomy under a nominal Yugoslav banner.



Waiting for Nato . . . Resigned villagers in the former Kosovar rebel stronghold of Junik, recently captured by the Serbs PHOTO: SRDJAN ILIC

In Albania, meanwhile, Nato logistics units have been preparing the way for the troops from 14 countries, including Russia and Lithuania, who are to join the "partnership for peace" exercises. This will include much heart-warming activity. The French have sent a team of engineers who plan to rebuild a school. The US marines will use their bulldozers to build roads.

There will be paratroop drops, air supply exercises, and a splendid air show for the Albanians. If the neighbouring Kosovans dare to look up from their shelters, they may be able to see some of it. However, this may not be a good idea, since the last big Nato air exercise so convinced the KLA that help was at hand that they launched their offensive against Serb-held towns, which in turn provoked the latest Serbian counter-strikes.

There is some nervousness about the Russian contingent after the last joint exercise in Denmark in June, when Russian troops trashed their barracks after getting drunk. Arriving with just the uniforms they were wearing, the Russians were equipped by the Danes with sleeping bags and other kit, which they then sold to buy vodka.

The Americans are incensed in particular with the Russian foreign minister, Yevgeny Primakov, an old Russian intelligence hand who is suspected of seeking to divide and sabotage Nato. At the same time US officials have been saying off the record that they believe Russia has given Serbia's leader, Slobodan Milosevic, a guarantee that Moscow will obstruct any international action to stop his operations in Kosovo. Whether in the name of Slavic solidarity, out of a desire to subvert Nato or, as Moscow says, on that grand UN principle of no outside interference in the internal affairs of a member state, the Russians are being extraordinarily unhelpful.

The irony here is that the US and its European allies have started an urgent new round of G7 consultations to discuss yet another big financial bailout for Russia. The International Monetary Fund is also involved, but after its latest $15 billion credit guarantee, the IMF's coffers are almost empty. No Kosovo, no bailout might look an attractive negotiating stance to the uninitiated, but professional diplomats shrink in horror from the idea of confusing geo-politics with geo-finance. "Apples and oranges, old boy," they protest.

At some point, however, the question must be asked as to how long the Russians can expect to be treated as reliable members of the international community, when their economy must be regularly bailed out however little they do to enact promised reforms, and when their foreign minister behaves as if the cold war were still at its frostiest.

Doubtless this problem will be raised next month in Moscow, when President Clinton visits Boris Yeltsin for a summit the Americans said would not take place until the Russians ratified the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. So far, no treaty. Perhaps Clinton has not noticed. He has been somewhat distracted of late by what we might call domestic affairs. But Kosovo is hardly a new problem. Nato has been making noises of stern resolve and issuing solemn final warnings to Serbia for the past four months.

Washington Post, page 15

Americans wonder who they can count on



Washington diary

Gary Younge

IF A census really is a device for holding a mirror up to a nation so that it can seriously examine what it looks like, then the United States must be feeling pretty ugly right now.

The Republicans and Democrats are at loggerheads about how the census for 2000 should be counted. One director of the US census bureau has already quit. The questionnaire has not been approved. Various minorities say that they will be threatened with either being under-represented, unrepresented or misrepresented. The House Speaker, Newt Gingrich, has evoked the wrath of the Founding Fathers. And the president has warned that if he does not get his way he will use his veto. Crunching numbers has never been more painful.

The row over how the census should be conducted is split down party lines. The Clinton administration wants to mix the traditional door-to-door head-count — which is how the census has been conducted in the past — with statistical sampling in order to better account for those people whom the census officers usually miss. Under this plan the bureau would aim to gather information on 90 per cent of the population and then use a mathematical formula to estimate the number and characteristics of the remaining 10 per cent.

Republicans say this is bound to lead to inaccuracies. People will be "invented" and the government pollsters, not science, will really decide who those people are. "That transfers to politicians an amount of power that none of the Founding Fathers would have agreed to," said Gingrich during a debate on the issue in the House of Representatives earlier this month. "Don't ask the people of the United States to rely on politicians to control pollsters to count virtual citizens," he said.

Democrats argue that the way in which the census is conducted at the moment already leads to inaccuracies. The established method of head-counting used in the 1990 census missed about 4 million people, they point out. Most of them were Hispanics, blacks, Asians, American Indians and the rural poor. More than half were children. One report suggests that 12 per cent of American Indians living on reservations were missed. According to this view, given the shortfall of the current system, it would be better to top up the figures gathered by a head count with some calculated guess work.

"The census is today's great civil rights issue, and once again they are standing against what is right," said House minority leader Richard Gephardt.

The vote in the House earlier this month revealed an unusual level of party discipline. Under the Republican bill, which was passed 227 to 201, the census bureau will receive only half its $956 million in annual funds before the end of next March. The president will have to come back with an estimate of the total cost of conducting the census and ask Congress for the rest of the money.

On the face of it the Republicans do have common sense on their side. How, one wonders, can it possibly be more accurate to guess a number? Revising how they count heads to make sure the census officers are more accurate would be one thing. But giving up on counting some of them altogether and running the numbers through a computer is quite another.

But the Democrats have the scientists and financial prudence on their side. Their sampling strategy has the support of both the American Statistical Association and the National Academy of Sciences. Their plan will also cost less money than the full head-count.

Tom Sawyer, a Democrat congressman from Ohio, says it is a modern method for a modernising country. "Americans are more mobile than they have ever been. There are fewer people at home during the day. Family make-up is more diverse. The nation has changed and the way we count the nation has to change with it," he says.

But the heart of the matter is not identity, or even accuracy, but politics. The figures the census throws up will be used to allocate billions of federal dollars to various parts of the country. It will also help reapportion House, state, legislative and local districts.

Many of those whom the Democrats say were missed by the last census — the poor, the black and the other ethnic minorities — are more likely to vote Democrat than Republican. President Clinton has already promised the Hispanic caucus and the Democratic caucus that he would veto any egregious legislation relating to the census.

Gerrymandering, not sampling, is what the Democrats are really up to, say the Republicans. Playing politics, not pinpointing people, is the Republicans' game, insist Democrats. Neither side looks inclined to compromise. Therein lies the most accurate snapshot of what the US looks like as it prepares to enter the next millennium.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Afrikaners face death on the farm

The unequal distribution of land is being blamed for attacks on South Africa's white farmers. **Alex Duval Smith** reports from Bothaville

HENNIE Louwrens, a white farmer, has worked alongside the 12 black labourers he employs for 23 years without apparent incident. But since March a constant reminder of the price of 300 years of white domination over South Africa's soil has been lodged in his lower abdomen — a bullet from a Browning.

Mr Louwrens, a 46-year-old maize and cattle farmer in the Free State, does not understand why he was picked out in the spate of attacks in which 570 farmers have been killed in four years and, according to the South African Agricultural Union (SAAU), are being killed at the rate of one every three days.

In the wake of an upsurge in the attacks — a family of four was shot dead in the Western Cape two weeks ago, apparently by a disgruntled labourer — some farmers have voted to withhold taxes in protest against alleged government inaction.

Opposition parties claim that President Nelson Mandela's government is not concerned about the victims because they are white. This week government ministers are due to meet the SAAU and its strongest political ally, the radical Freedom Front, to try to hammer out a solution.

Despite three government reports, the parties, including the agriculture minister, Derek Hanekom, and the safety and security minister, Sydney Mufamadi, have been unable to pinpoint either the perpetrators of the attacks or their motives. There are suspicions that the trend reflects a race war.

The slow process of shifting land ownership is undoubtedly an underlying motive for the attacks. When apartheid ended in 1994, 87 per cent of the land in South Africa was in the hands of just 12 per cent of the population.

"They had murder in their eyes," said Mr Louwrens, recalling the March 15 attack on him, his wife Soekie and their daughter Carin, aged 18. "We had left the house early, in the BMW, to go to Soekie's father's 81st birthday, and we learned later that the five men arrived soon after our departure. They had all day to burgle the house, yet they waited for us to return, just before 6pm, so they could murder me," he said.

Hennie Louwrens makes a routine patrol on his land. He was shot in a rash of attacks on farmers which has led to claims that the government does not care about white victims PHOTOGRAPH: CAROLINE SUZMAN

The house, a large bungalow in the Louwrenses' 1,680 acres of land, bristles with security — even by white South African standards. Above the porch, red and green flashing lights, visible from a distance, serve as early warning. Inside the rooms are separated by sliding security gates. In common with 300 farms in a 40-mile radius, the family has a two-way radio and their call-sign, VW65, is painted on the roof to allow for aerial rescue.

"The attackers had cut the electricity before breaking in and clearing out the gun safe and the jewellery safe. They were waiting in ambush, one of them was on the roof," Mr Louwrens said.

He was attacked with his own arsenal of weaponry — the baby Browning, a 9mm Beretta pistol, an Uzi sub-machine-gun, a hunting rifle and an R4 assault rifle — issued by the South African military as part of its security scheme for farmers.

Mr and Mrs Louwrens consider their collection of weaponry unexceptional for a South African farm and their relationship with their staff good.

He said: "I grew up with one of my workers. We have known each other for 40 years. They have their own cattle and I plough a piece of land for them. I pay them a monthly salary, with a bonus after the harvest.

"I provide electricity and water and 80kg of maize meal a month. Some people think it is strange to pay in food but they prefer it that way."

Mrs Louwrens, a former primary school teacher, said: "When one of their children is hurt, they know to come to me for medical help. When they have marital problems, they come to me and I mediate."

Their "us and them" world is typical of the Afrikaner-dominated Free State, where farm attacks have been most numerous. But the couple insists that the image of the white farmer beating his black labourers is outdated.

"Ninety-nine per cent of farmers have a good relationship with their staff. One of the farmers who was killed in this area had left 100,000 rands ($16,000) to the old woman who raised him," Mr Louwrens said. His family settled in South Africa in the 17th century.

Yet the police who arrested five men for the attack on the family believe it was an inside job. "They think one of the women gave information about the house. I would like to fire her husband, who still works for me, but under the new labour legislation, I cannot," Mr Louwrens said.

He considers tax strikes an option, but would prefer the introduction of new commando units to police farms, "as long as they also had blacks in the ranks". He would like international pressure to be brought on the government to take action against the attacks.

While the SAAU and the Freedom Front argue that the attacks are politically motivated and possibly organised, Mr Hanekom has come under fire for expressing his view that the majority of farmers supported the apartheid system that created the land problems, which are being rectified only slowly by new legislation.

Mr Hanekom said: "The farmers never threatened to withhold taxes when children were in detention and activists were being poisoned; they never threatened civil action against apartheid. Why suddenly are they threatening civil action?"

But Mr Louwrens, who now carries his Beretta on his hip after dark, was insistent. "I am an African and I intend to remain an African. I worked for this land and no one is going to take it away."

Paris hotel lays on Diana death tour

Jon Henley in Paris

NOT to be outdone by the brief tour of Princess Diana's life on show at the family home of Althorp this summer, a Parisian hotelier has devised what can only be described as a brief tour of her death.

"I am simply responding to demand from my clients," said an unabashed Emile Cacciari, manager of the three-star Odéon Hotel on the Left Bank, who plans to offer guests and other tourists the chance to relive Diana's final moments until the first anniversary of her death on August 31. "We have a lot of American visitors, and whenever they leave the hotel in the morning they want to know two things and two things only: where is the Eiffel Tower, and where is the Pont de l'Alma? People want to go there, it's as simple as that."

The tour, starting this week, which will be free for hotel residents and $25 for others, is by minibus or — for those with more money and a desire for grisly authenticity — in a Mercedes limousine like the one in which Diana died in the Pont de l'Alma underpass last summer.

Mr Cacciari insisted last week it was not a money-making exercise. "It's just a new idea for the package we always offer in August when business is slow," he said. "All the proceeds will be donated to the Diana fund."

The tour will go first to the Al Fayed-owned Ritz Hotel in the Place Vendôme, where Diana and Dodi dined together before setting off on the fatal journey. It will then follow the couple's route across the Place de la Concorde and alongside the river Seine, where the driver, Henri Paul, drove at high speed in an attempt to shake off a posse of photographers.

After a quick trip through the underpass — past the 13th pillar into which Diana's car slammed — the bus will stop at the Place de l'Alma, allowing passengers to add their own tribute to the hundreds of bouquets and messages left daily by tourists at her unofficial shrine.

The visit will conclude outside the Pitié-Salpetrière hospital, where Diana was taken after the accident.

Denis Sergeant of Fox-Trot Tours, which will operate the tour, said: "It will be plain and simple, just a short guided tour that will basically make things easier for people who want to go to these places anyway."

Paris city hall has declined to comment, as have the Ritz hotel and Buckingham Palace. The memorial fund said it would not accept any of the proceeds.

Booty hunters dig deep for Marcos gold

Adam Easton in Manila

TWELVE years after the Marcos family fled, the Phillipines is in the grip of a gold rush — in the grounds of one of the houses used by the late Ferdinand Marcos and his cronies.

The body set up to find the missing Marcos millions, the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG), claims to have been told that hundreds of tonnes of gold may lie buried in a compound in the resort of Baguio City, in northern Luzon. The compound contains mansions used as summer homes by Marcos family associates.

The new PCGG chairman, Felix de Guzman, said the grounds had been sealed off in preparation for digging. He said the PCGG had found evidence of unauthorised excavations at the site. "We have to make sure of the gold's existence by checking our own backyard before looking for it abroad," he said.

No one knows exactly how much wealth the dictator accumulated before he was toppled in 1986, but he is estimated to have fled with about $10 billion.

The mystery is whether he managed to get his hands on the Yamashita treasure, a Japanese gold hoard looted from southeast Asian countries as the imperial army advanced across the continent during the second world war. It supposedly ended up in the Philippines, and it is thought that the overall commander, General Yamashita, was unable to remove it before the country was liberated in 1945.

It is widely believed that Marcos discovered the treasure in the 1960s, and that that is how he managed to accumulate so much wealth so quickly. But in 12 years the PCGG has not found a single nugget. In fact, it has only been able to trace a mere $560 million in a Swiss bank account to the Marcos family.

Despite this, the hunt for the gold continues. Incoming PCGG heads routinely launch new searches. During Cory Aquino's presidency an American treasure hunter dug up Fort Santiago, the historic Spanish fortress in the heart of Manila. No gold was found.

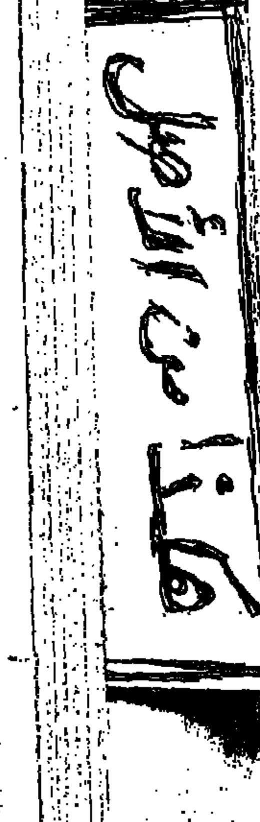
Senator Franklin Drilon, who headed a committee that investigated claims of an earlier bounty asked: "Why is it that whenever there is a new chairman at the PCGG, he always gets duped into believing that this gold hoard exists?"

One of the leads the PCGG is checking on is said to be from a Briton who claims to be able to direct the government to the buried gold. "I know their exact whereabouts," he told the PCGG in a recent letter.

Perhaps the key to the latest search could be the fragility of the PCGG itself. The new president, Joseph Estrada, has said he will abolish it within a year unless it turns up some Marcos money or gold soon.

Another factor may be the government's frantic desire to raise funds to prop up the economy, buckling under the weight of the regional currency crisis.

Digging for Yamashita or stashed Marcos gold may be a long shot, but just like its predecessors, the new government cannot see the harm in looking.



The Week In Britain James Lewis

Leftwingers seek to halt Blair's march to centre

THE Prime Minister Tony Blair, who thought he had tamed the Labour party's left wingers once and for all, has discovered that, though fewer in number, they are still very much alive and plan to give their authoritarian leadership a hard time between now and the party conference in October.

The first hints of trouble arose last week when Liz Davies, a leftwing candidate for the National Executive Committee (NEC), complained about plans to allow telephone voting in the ballot for constituency representatives on the committee. She was supported by the leftwing MP, Ken Livingstone, who alleged that changes in the voting system, which could open the door to abuse, had been made without discussion.

Another cause for unease, voiced by the veteran leftwinger, Tony Benn, is that the annual conference will no longer allow motions critical of the leadership. Instead of being a forum for open and democratic debate, he said, the occasion would become like an American political convention in which delegates arrived with balloons, ready to release them when the leader spoke.

Labour's lead in the opinion polls has also slipped, from 25 points last month to 16 points, although this is still 3 points higher than when Labour took office. Membership, too, is down, from its January peak of 405,000 to 394,000.

A large grassroots membership was part of Mr Blair's scheme for curbing the might of the unions and the NEC, and to clip the wings of pressure groups that could be a potential source of embarrassment to the leadership. He was said to want to lead "an organisation of fee-paying moderates rather than grudge-bearing activists".

One of the Prime Minister's advisers was quoted last week as saying that "Tony's real interest is no longer in control of the party but the creation of a national movement outside it". The disdain he often shows for the party, and for his MPs, suggest that there may be some truth in this. But he may find that the rank-and-file still has the ability to exact vengeance.

THE campaign by Prince Charles to regain the public's favour following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales has proved a quiet triumph according to a Guardian/ICM opinion poll, which showed a small majority (54 per cent) of the public saying, for the first time in four years, that he would make a good king.

A solid 28 per cent, however, still remain hostile to the monarchy, and a further 20 per cent of the public are uncertain about the value of the royal family. And in spite of a campaign by Buckingham Palace to "modernise" the monarchy, some 69 per cent of the public still believe that the royals are "out of touch with ordinary people".

Meanwhile more than 2,000 people are expected to march on Buckingham Palace in October in the first significant anti-royal demonstration since rioting over the cost of Queen Victoria's Jubilee. The organisers — the Movement Against the Monarchy (or MA'M) — promise a number of stunts, including a home-made guillotine.

FIVE senior tax inspectors stayed in lavish accommodation and gambled in casinos on foreign trips paid for by tax evaders, according to a report by Parliament's financial watchdog, the National Audit Office.

Its investigation followed the jailing of an inspector on counts of corruption which included accepting a £22,000 holiday for himself and his wife in Bermuda and New York, and the services of a prostitute paid by an Iraqi oil consultant.

The auditors called for much tougher oversight of future tax investigations, including vetting of tax inspectors' bank accounts.

Another report showed that investigators appointed in a £3 million "crackdown" by the Government on organised benefit fraud had produced only one successful prosecution in two years. In that time they spent £110,000 on fitting out new offices and £138,000 on cars for their own private use.

SADLER'S WELLS is to be the first major theatre to introduce a blanket ban on audience smoking, when its new £48 million building opens in north London in October.

But the ban doesn't extend backstage after an outcry from performers. "Dancers are among the hardest smokers around," said a spokesman for Rambert Dance Company, the first to perform there.

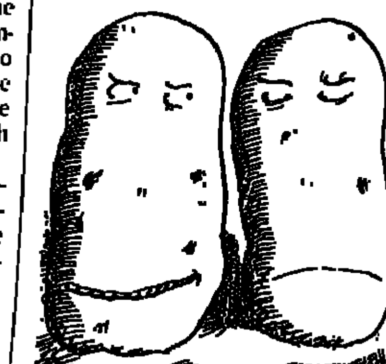
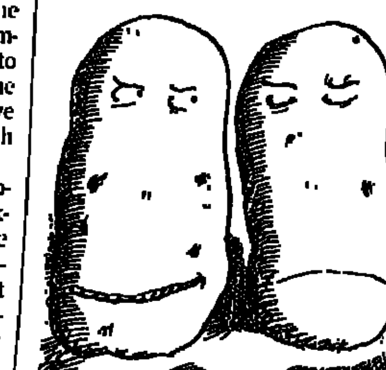
A small room, which has been nicknamed the sin bin, has been set aside so performers can indulge their addiction.

DR ARPAD Pusztai, the scientist who last week triggered alarm over the safety of genetically modified potatoes, was suspended from his research job with the Rowett Research Institute in Aberdeen, and told to retire.

His boss, Professor Philip James, said it was tragic to have to suspend a distinguished biologist with a world reputation, but he had spread "misleading information" by confusing the results of two experiments. Opponents of genetically modified foods claimed it was "another step in a long line of stifling research workers from telling us what is going on".





Two in the hand . . . A brace of grouse testifies to the shooting skills of a client on a Scottish moor PHOTO: MURDO MacLEOD

Season starts with whimper

Duncan Campbell

MAHARAJAH Duleep Singh bagged a record 220 brace of grouse on the first day of the season at Grandtully in Perthshire — but that was in 1871. Last week, a mixture of hunt saboteurs, foul early summer and the strong pound meant the Glorious Twelfth went off with only a muted bang.

Grouse breeding in the north of England and Scotland was patchy this year because of disease, partly caused by the poor weather. And some regular foreign shooters are absent from the world's only organised grouse shooting areas, perhaps finding the expense too much.

About 450,000 grouse are shot annually on Britain's moors, with shooters spending thousands a week. Beaters earn about £18 daily — half the amount the Savoy hotel in London was charging this week for grouse as a dinner course.

Debts decide students' degrees

Vivek Chaudhary

THE impact of student debt and tuition fees was revealed last week in a report showing that students are deserting traditional degree subjects in favour of vocational courses.

Tony Higgins, chief executive of the Universities and Colleges Admission Service (Ucas), which produced the report, said figures showed fewer students applying for traditional degree courses, such as the physical sciences, classics and arts, and more for courses in marketing, computer science and software engineering.

Mr Higgins said: "The trend is towards courses that are likely to lead towards better paid jobs and away from jobs such as those in the caring professions. There could be a link between loans and tuition fees and students deciding to opt for vocational courses, which are more likely to lead to employment."

The report also indicated a decline in the numbers of mature students applying for university places. It showed that the number of students aged under 21 applying for university increased by almost 10 per cent between 1995 and 1997, but the proportion of mature students applying fell by almost 3 per cent over the same period.

Mr Higgins said that the decline in mature students might have been prompted by the introduction of tuition fees and the financial effect it could have on their families. Recent figures have shown that the average student is likely to leave university almost £5,000 in debt.

Meanwhile the annual student survey by the Push university guide says that the average student debt run up in a year has risen to more than £1,700, from £1,400 12 months ago; the worst cases owe up to £12,000 after three years at university. For the first time this year students will also have to pay £1,000-a-year tuition fees.

The National Union of Students said the introduction of fees will accelerate the crisis. "Students are giving up their courses increasingly for financial reasons," a spokeswoman said. "They just cannot afford it, and the situation is going to get worse. We do not believe students or their parents should have to pay for their tuition."

Students in London were worst off, with an average annual debt of more than £2,000 — more than 20 per cent up on last year.

The Push guide also claims the high drop-out rate at some institutions might be caused by students being encouraged to start courses they do not have the ability to complete. It cites Queen Mary and Westfield College in east London which is said to have a 27 per cent drop-out rate despite one of the lowest debt averages in London, at £650.

The college insists the true rate is 14 per cent when students who take four years to complete a three-year course are taken into account. It also says: "We do a lot of science and engineering courses which are particularly tough, so you would expect some to give up."

Publishing rivals fight a war of words

A "REVOLUTIONARY" new Oxford dictionary was published last week with a declaration that split infinitives are OK and the phrase "Christian name" is obsolete, *writes John Ezard.*

Joyce Morris, patron of the Queen's English Society, said: "The Oxford University Press is very powerful. If it is going to say this kind of thing, goodness knows what is going to happen to English."

The New Oxford Dictionary of English (£29.99) lists 2,000 new expressions which have become rife in the six years it has taken to produce. Among these are "phwoah" — "appreciation of the opposite sex by the inarticulate" and "blended family" — one "incorporating children from several relationships".

OUP, its publishers, announced the dictionary with the slogan "Infinitives *should* be split". After a new, computerised look at word archives dating back a century, it says dislike of the habit is based on confusion between the placing of adverbs in Latin and English.

Though "some traditionalists" might call it an error, "in standard English the principle of allowing split infinitives is broadly accepted as normal and useful".

Under the heading "Christian names obsolete", the OUP says the term has largely given way to phrases such as "first name" and "given name" — "in recognition that English-speaking societies have many religions and cultures".

Use of "he" to include men and women is dismissed as "old-fashioned and sexist", while using "he and she" is "tiresomely long-winded". Instead, the editor, Judy Pearsall, writes that the book has adopted the use of "they" — as in "ask a friend if they could help" — although some call this ungrammatical.

As well as being concerned with political correctness, publishers were locked in a shelf war worth millions of pounds. In a situation without precedent, the three giants — Chambers, Collins and OUP — found themselves due to publish blockbuster dictionaries within the same three weeks.

OUP scooped publicity by being first and for announcing a green light for the split infinitive. An angry Chambers — whose dictionary sanctioned split infinitives in 1993 — rushed forward its publication.

This left Collins lagging, with no copies of its Millennium English Dictionary on the streets. The firm, the fastest growing dictionary publisher of the past decade, was hoping to catch up with a champagne launch next month.

All are desperate to get their volumes out before they are lost in the autumn wave of general books.

'I thought the bombing was all over'

Jonathan Freedland on the tornado of violence that hit a quiet Ulster town

Firefighters surround the wreckage of the car bomb that devastated Omagh PHOTOGRAPH: PETER MORRISON

LIKE every place that has been bombed, Omagh looks like a town torn up by a tornado. Just like Enniskillen, Oklahoma or Nairobi before it, a whirlwind has ripped this place apart — peeling the roof off a building like the lid from a sardine can, scattering glass like rainfall, and cutting through human lives like the most vengeful of hurricanes, claiming 28 souls and injuring 220.

Like every bombed town, Omagh has fallen under a deathly hush. People move quietly, whispering their greetings. No one wants to smile or laugh. Adult men clasp their hands to their foreheads, their faces bowed so no one will see their eyes red from tears. Teenage girls gnaw their fingernails. Omagh was not a town last weekend: it was a funeral.

Like every place whose name has entered the unholy canon of atrocity — Guildford, Warrington, Brighton — Omagh has seen a procession of dignitaries come to mourn. The words are all so similar, so utterly useless really, that after a while they merge into a blur. It is not their fault; no one can say anything. Even the promise of a cross-border security summit sounds like Canute's courtiers raging at the waves.

In all this, Omagh is no different from any town visited by the tornado of terrorism. The pictures from here look similar to those from Kenya and Tanzania. But for Omagh this is not just another atrocity. The people of this small, the market town have not seen it before. Even if this were not the worst act of violence in the 30-year history of the Troubles — which it is — it would feel like it. Because, this time, it happened to them.

The 28 dead, seven of them children, are their people, their neighbours, their sons, their daughters. The three generations of women from a single family killed last Saturday, one of them just 18 months old, were theirs too. There was no official target for this bomb, no British army installation, RUC station or paramilitary cell that was in the sights of the murderers. Instead, the bomb hit right where it was placed: at the heart of Omagh.

As Pat McDonnell, an SDLP member of the nationalist-dominated local council, said: "We're all together. This bomb did not discriminate according to how you voted. This is an entire community which has been assaulted."

And that is how it feels. Suddenly everything in this town looks different. Disaster has a grisly knack of making the previously innocuous seem ironic, or cruelly appropriate. How many Omagh residents will now pause as they drive in from Belfast, realising that the first place they see as they come into town is a graveyard? How many will look again at the shop just around the corner from the blast which killed so many children, the shop called Nippers' Corner?

The people of Omagh are also pondering all the tiny, mundane decisions that now seem like fate. How come they were not there at that moment? Sean Loughran could not sleep last Saturday night, constantly thinking about that bomb. He knows Omagh better than anyone, has lived there all his life and runs the Campsie Bar, just by Market Street. He heard the blast and ran right into the carnage. He was looking for his son, Paul, aged just nine.

"I couldn't believe it, I was standing in bodies," he said. A water main had burst and water was gushing everywhere, unleashing rivers of blood: not as metaphor, but as fact. "The bodies were floating past me, but you couldn't even tell that that's what they were," he said, and his voice choked.

He saw arms, legs and so much blood, but still no sign of Paul. He rushed to his home and — thank God Almighty — there was the lad, waiting for him, thinking the very same thing. "Da, I'm here!" the boy said, and as he hugged his son tight, Mr Loughran felt a relief sweeter than he had ever known.

He had believed Omagh would never see such darkness. "I thought the bombing was all over, with the agreement and the assembly and everything."

He was not the only one. The politicians struggled because the old script no longer applied. Gerry Adams did his best, condemning this action, committed by what everyone assumes is a republican splinter group, in language he never applied to the Provisional IRA. "I am totally horrified by this action. I condemn it without any equivocation," he said. Tony Blair also spoke of how the bombers would not win. "They are not going to destroy the chance of a decent future for people in Northern Ireland."

But neither could deploy the old formula of calling for a peace process. Because Northern Ireland already has one. The war has in effect been ended — and yet a bloody act of war has been committed. No wonder the politicians sounded numb and helpless: what more can they do?

The agreement, the referendum, the elections, were all tests of the people's determination to have peace — and the people voted Yes every time. Now Northern Ireland is being tested again.

Will they all unite against the handful of rejectionists who are bent on thwarting the march toward reconciliation? Or will they turn on each other?

But these questions are far from the minds of the townsfolk. They are like the parents asked to identify a son by just a shoe. They are like the pregnant woman who looked on the scene of devastation and clutched her belly, as if fearful that the tornado might strike again.

Pooh's £50m Garrick Club honeypot tastes not so sweet

John Ezard

ANTHONY Butcher QC, chairman of the Garrick Club, was stunned. "We thought we might not get a quorum," he said as 300 members swarmed into the coffee room last week like bees round a honeypot.

The club committee had commissioned market research which forecast a minuscule turnout. "It just shows how wrong market research can be."

This was bigger than anything in the London club's 167-year history — a £50 million bonanza from the sale to Disney of a slice of Winnie the Pooh copyright bequeathed to it by the author A A Milne.

And the hope for many Garrick men was a £39,000 windfall for each of the 1,300 members — mostly lawyers, actors, publishers and journalists.

For a cauldron of expectation like this, the coffee room was too small. So the members, all men and mostly over 60, trooped half a mile by taxi, foot and sometimes by crutch to the Fortune Theatre.

It was only there that members learned from Mr Butcher just how wrong rank-and-file dreams can be. After tax, lawyers' fees, a new charitable trust and proposed club endowments had taken their cut, the £50 million bonanza was whittled down to £12 million. This would yield £10,000 per member. The club will spend the next few months in frantic consultation about whether what one resolution joyously called "a distribution of assets" should be made.

Most speakers avoided the topic of cash in hand. But a longstanding Garrick member said afterwards: "The unspoken agenda of the whole meeting was, 'What's in it for me?' "

For other members a consolation was that part of the £8 million earmarked for charity is expected to be spent on the Garrick's main objectives. These are "literary, dramatic, social — and convivial". So there may at least be a few drinks in it.

Atomic plant fined for plutonium contamination

Stuart Millar

THE Government's atomic weapons factory was this week fined £22,000 after an accident in which two workers were contaminated with plutonium.

James Birch and Martin Tolsen inhaled radioactive particles as they inspected cleaning work on redundant equipment at the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston, Berkshire.

Radiation levels in the laboratory were reported to be so high after the incident that Health and Safety Executive officials were unable to carry out an inspection for more than two months.

AWE plc, the parent company, and Hunting Brae Ltd, the site licensee, admitted liability for the accident on December 15 last year, which prompted the first HSE prosecution against Aldermaston for a leak of radioactive plutonium. The lethal element provides a nuclear weapon's explosive core.

AWE plc admitted failure to ensure the health and safety of its employees and was fined £14,000 with £3,750 costs by magistrates in Newbury.

Site licensee Hunting Brae Ltd admitted failing to ensure the work was carried out under the control of suitably qualified personnel, and a separate charge of undertaking ionising radiation work without the necessary steps being taken to restrict exposure of the two workers to ionising radiation. It was fined £4,000 for each charge with £3,750 costs.

After the hearing, Peter O'Connor, an HSE spokesman, said: "We wanted a conviction and we got one, so we are naturally satisfied. The prosecution and the penalties reflect the seriousness of the incident, and we hope that the case serves as a lesson to other companies."

The HSE accepted that neither man's health had been seriously affected as they had each inhaled less than a tenth of the exposure limit.

In Brief

WOMEN'S groups condemned a ruling that allowed Anthony Burstow — the first stalker prosecuted for inflicting grievous bodily harm on his victim without touching her — to walk free from court, despite allegedly harassing his victim within six months of his release from jail.

HYPNOTIST Paul McKenna successfully defended an action brought by Christopher Gates, one of his stage show volunteers, who claimed the experience transformed him into an aggressive schizophrenic.

MURIEL Jakubait, sister of Ruth Ellis, the last woman to be hanged in Britain, is hoping new evidence may pave the way for the murder conviction to be downgraded to manslaughter.

GRAINY pictures that appear to show human remains in the 24-year-old wreck of the Gaul, the trawler whose fate has been bedevilled by allegations of spying, were transmitted to a government survey ship from cameras deep in Arctic waters.

THOMAS GILMOUR, aged 23, has been charged with murdering three brothers in last month's firebomb attack on a house in Ballymoney, Co Antrim.

THE rogue futures trader Nick Leeson, diagnosed with cancer of the colon, will not need chemotherapy after a successful operation to remove a tumour. He is serving a 6½-year sentence in Singapore for fraud.

VICTORIA AITKEN, the 18-year-old daughter of the former Cabinet minister Jonathan Aitken, will not be prosecuted for perjury or perverting the course of justice.

WILDLIFE in the New Forest faced further danger after a 1,000 mink were released from the fur farm where some 6,000 were set free earlier this month.

THE actor Sir Anthony Hopkins has given £1 million to the National Trust towards a £3 million appeal to buy Snowdonia for the nation.

THE world's first triple transplant patient, Davina Thompson, has died at the age of 47, 12 years after she was given a new heart, lungs and liver.

MIKE WATKINS, one of the army's leading bomb disposal experts, was killed during an operation to locate and clear unexploded charges from first world war tunnels in France.

GENERAL Sir Harry Tuzo, the commanding officer in Northern Ireland in 1971 who went on to become Nato's deputy supreme commander, has died at the age of 80.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
August 23 1998

Cook aims to curb power of Brussels

Ewen MacAskill

THE FOREIGN Secretary, Robin Cook, proposed a radical departure in European policy last week: the creation of a second chamber in Europe, made up of MPs from Westminster and other national parliaments, to curb the power of Brussels.

In what would amount to the biggest recasting of European policy since Labour came to power last year, the second chamber would sift through decisions made in Brussels and block any that meddle in the minutiae of national life. Mr Cook would like to see an end to Brussels issuing directives that impinge on daily life and instead restrict it to setting standards.

The proposal, which will reignite the European debate, is close in sentiment to ideas put forward by the Conservatives for reducing the power of Brussels.

But although Mr Cook has often been portrayed as one of Labour's leading Eurosceptics, he considers himself a pro-European and believes the proposals come from a pro-European standpoint. The Eurosceptic tag was attached to him because he opposed joining up to the single currency early, but he insisted this was on economic grounds rather than principle. His proposal for a second chamber was cleared by Downing Street before Tony Blair went on holiday, and it is likely to be put to a summit of European leaders in Vienna in October.

The second chamber is aimed at involving MPs at Westminster directly in the running of the European Union. "We don't want the Union to fail. We would suffer. Our parliament, therefore, needs to be part of the project rather than outside of it," he said.

The Foreign Secretary, whose first year in office has been overshadowed by his personal life and by rows over India, Israel and Sierra Leone, has not been as visible on Europe as the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, Gordon Brown. Having found a breathing space, he has taken up a request from Mr Blair to rethink European policy. His new ideas will act as a counterweight to those fearful of increased European integration and federalism, especially when Britain, as is now almost certain, joins the single currency.

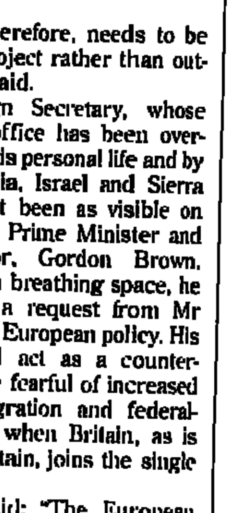
Mr Cook said: "The European Parliament does a very useful job but the missing link is tying the national parliaments with the work of Europe. At the moment, there is not an adequate basis for representation from the national parliaments to come together to discuss Europe, and somewhere within the broad family of European institutions there should be room for that.

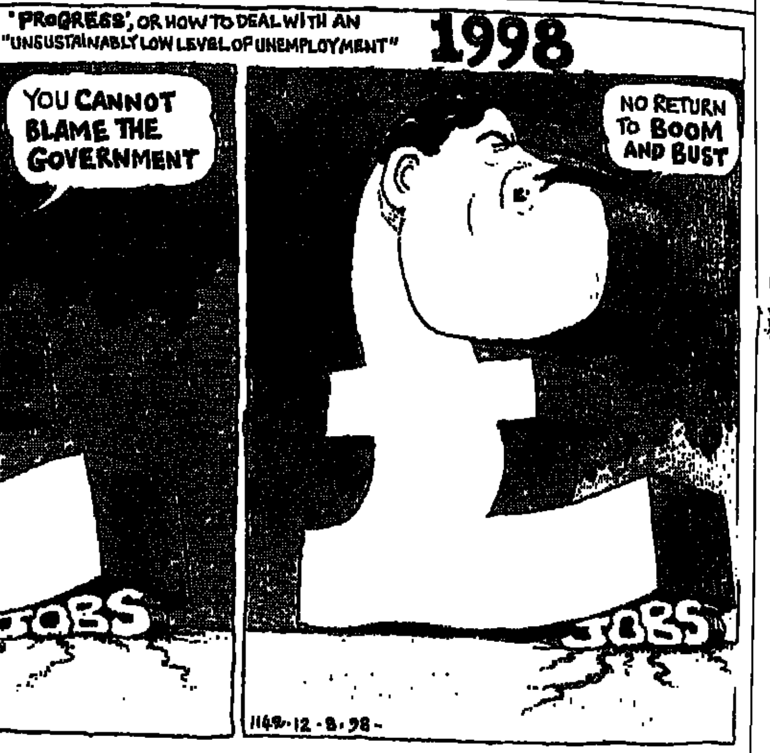
"If we do want Europe to thrive, if we do want popular support for Europe, we must develop some way to link the parliaments of the member states."

The proposal will not find a welcome with all Labour MPs and Euro-MPs, some of whom will be dismayed at the prospect of another tier of government.

The Foreign Office is to hold a meeting to thrash out ideas later this month with senior diplomats.

Mr Cook would like a code to spell out what are the responsibilities of Europe and what are the responsibilities of nation-states.





Unemployment figures lift economic gloom

Mark Atkinson and Ewen MacAskill

THE Government went on the offensive last week after a hat-trick of good news on the economy helped to dispel some of the gloom induced by a series of high-profile job losses in industry which were blamed on the strong pound.

Following redundancies in recent weeks at leading companies, including Siemens, Rover and BOC, the industrial gases group, official figures showed a sharp drop in economy-wide unemployment in July and an easing in the rate of earnings growth, one of the key barometers of inflation.

At the same time, the Bank of England's powerful monetary policy committee (MPC), which controls interest rates, predicted the Government was likely to hit its 2.5 per cent inflation target.

The employment minister, Andrew Smith, seized on the pay and jobless figures, saying they were a big setback for the "doom and gloom merchants".

Stephen Byers, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, said: "[The] news shows that we are on course to achieve economic stability."

But the dangers of celebrating prematurely were immediately highlighted by fresh news of job losses at the Korean-owned Halla, maker of fork-lift trucks and excavators in Merthyr Tydfil, which were blamed on the deepening Asian economic crisis.

The MPC also admitted for the first time that, although inflation appeared to be under control, there was a one in eight chance of recession. "The balance of risks to output is on the downside," said the MPC, citing continuing concerns about the world economy.

The Trades Union Congress general secretary, John Monks, warned: "As job losses begin to pile up in manufacturing, unemployment will start to rise by the end of this year."

According to the Office for National Statistics, the claimant count fell by 26,000 last month to stand at 1,335,100, while the Government-preferred International Labour Organisation method of measuring unemployment, which includes people not eligible for benefit, fell by 62,000 in the three months to June to a record low of 1,802,000.

Government opts against ageism legislation

THE Government has shied away from legislating against age discrimination in the workplace, opting instead for a voluntary code, *writes Ewen MacAskill.*

The Employment Minister, Andrew Smith, last week defended the approach, but John Monks, general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, predicted a voluntary code would be "largely ineffective".

Mr Smith said: "By 2006 more than 25 per cent of the workforce will be aged 50 or over. Employers and the wider community cannot afford to discriminate unfairly on the grounds of age."

He added that the Government could not tackle the problem on its own but would have to work with employees and interest groups. His department will publish a non-statutory code of practice in the autumn, to come into force next year.

The Liberal Democrat industry spokesman, David Chidgey, accused the Government of going back on a "clear promise" Labour made in opposition to legislate against age discrimination. Labour before the general election hinted at tough action but made no manifesto commitment to legislate.

Mr Smith, aged 47, said the code could become a "soft law" and be taken into account at industrial tribunals. He said the Government had not ruled out the possibility of legislation, but he believed the code was an "early and positive way forward".

He said: "There are some trail-blazing firms like B&Q which have recognised very positively the benefits to their operations, to their customers, as well as the benefits to employees, of actually having an age-diverse workforce — older workers."

Mr Monks welcomed the recognition that discriminating on grounds of age was unacceptable, but added: "We are disappointed that the Government has not gone all the way in making ageism at work unlawful. We are particularly concerned that a voluntary code will be largely ineffective in the area of recruitment."

Up to half the staff of Domino's, a pizza delivery company, are aged 50 or more. Its finance director, Stephen Hemsley, said: "We find that older people are reliable, efficient and courteous."

Obscenity law is an ass, says outgoing film censor

Luke Harding

THE chief film censor, James Ferman, last week launched a sustained attack on Britain's confused obscenity laws, warning that the problem of pornography "will not go away".

In his last annual report Mr Ferman, the outgoing director of the British Board of Film Classification, called for the legalisation of explicit pornography. No film should be "treated with taboo", he added.

Mr Ferman, aged 68, denied his parting shot was directed at the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, who gave the censor a dressing down last November when he relaxed rules governing pornographic videos. Ministers accused him of failing to consult and described the move as "unacceptable".

The board was forced to return to its previous policy of refusing "R18" certificates to some videos with graphic sex scenes. "Pornography will once again be swept under the carpet where, in the name of the law, it will be mixed up with violence and degradation," Mr Ferman wrote. "The law may be an ass, but it is the board's job to uphold it, even in the face of astonished disbelief from the rest of the world."

Mr Ferman, who leaves in December after 23 years as a board director, said restrictions on "conventional" pornography had created a flourishing black market in which pornography and obscenity were mixed. "The more you try to ban it, the more it grows," he said.

Pro-censorship groups last week condemned Mr Ferman's claim that the only way to regulate pornography was to legalise it. John Beyer, of the National Viewers and Listeners Association founded by Mary Whitehouse, called for "an effective law" to deal with pornography and unlicensed sex shops. The Association of Chief Police Officers said it welcomed a review of legislation, but cautioned against "too liberal" a line. "The legal position is unclear and makes effective enforcement difficult," its spokesman admitted.

In his report, Mr Ferman conceded there had been heated debate last year about his role after certificates were granted to the films Lolita, Crash, and Kissed, the latter depicting necrophilia. "Despite public concern about their potential to corrupt viewers, all were classified '18', suitable for adult viewing, and public complaint evaporated once they had been released," he noted.

Looking back on his career, Mr Ferman said he was pleased to have "got rid of rape as entertainment" and to have "successfully kept the lid on screen violence".

Foreigners jailed as repatriation stalls

Alan Travis

MORE than 1,000 foreign prisoners in British jails are waiting to be sent back home to finish their sentences, according to the National Association of Probation Officers.

With only 17 sent back last year, many of the foreign inmates seem likely to have to endure a long wait for repatriation. The Home Office admits that only 64 foreign nationals have been moved to jails in their own countries in the past five years.

The survey by Napo says that, compared with others, foreigners in British jails face particular isolation. They are not allowed to move to the more relaxed conditions of open prisons and are not eligible for home leave.

According to the Home Office there are 1,297 prisoners in Britain from 37 countries who, under a Council of Europe convention on the transfer of sentenced persons, might qualify for repatriation. But ministers are unable to say how many are eligible.

In all, there are 4,664 foreigners held in prisons in England and Wales, more than a third for drug-related offences.

Napo says there is significant evidence that black prisoners, particularly women, jailed for drug offences, receive longer prison sentences than their white European counterparts.

Devaluation may destroy Yeltsin's legacy

Tom Whitehouse in Moscow and Mark Atkinson

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin was this week facing the destruction of the two lone achievements of his seven-year rule — a strong currency and low inflation — amid Russia's most serious financial crisis of the post-Soviet era.

Despite Mr Yeltsin's assurance last week that "there will be no devaluation — that's firm and definite", the rouble was allowed to fall by up to 20 per cent on Monday, ridiculing his claim to have the crisis under his control.

A three-month moratorium was declared on repayments of Russia's $140 billion foreign debt to maximise the central bank's dollar reserves for a prolonged defence of the rouble.

The International Monetary Fund's top negotiator for Russia, John Odling-Smee, arrived in Moscow on Monday for talks with Russian officials.

There was speculation that a new rescue package would be hammered out among the Group of Seven leading industrialised countries, which are keeping in constant contact about developments on fragile world financial markets.

But there are fears that the country cannot avoid an Indonesian-style breakdown. "This is the beginning of something much bigger," said the Moscow-based vice-president of a leading Western bank. "The IMF doesn't have the money Russia needs to prevent this — we're talking about $50 billion. The G7 has to come in, but there are big obstacles to overcome before it provides a bail-out on that scale."

Mr Yeltsin was uncharacteristically silent throughout the day, leaving a shaken prime minister, Sergei Kiriyenko, to explain the U-turn in policy. Mr Kiriyenko insisted that technically the rouble had not been devalued — the corridor within which it is allowed to trade with the dollar had merely been widened.

But this nuance was lost on ordinary Russians who queued outside banks across the country in the forlorn hope of trading their savings for dollars. Even at the top of its new band — 9½ roubles to the dollar, roughly 30 per cent higher than last week — most banks and exchange bureaux in Moscow ran out of dollars.

Prices of staple goods, most of which are imported, were raised on supermarket shelves shortly after the devaluation. There is grave doubt whether the millions of state workers, miners, teachers and doctors, who have not received their wages for months, are able to suffer a further squeeze on their meagre living standards.

● The Japanese finance minister Eisuke Sakakibara — known as Mr Yen for his ability to manipulate the foreign exchange markets — said that his country is on the verge of taking action to support the inexorable slide of the yen.

Mark Milner and **James Meek** in Moscow reflect on Russian prospects of preventing financial collapse

Kremlin's cure is merely a placebo

THE RUSSIANS have clearly borrowed the European Union's script for avoiding the "D" word. As in 1993, when the fluctuation bands of the exchange rate mechanism were widened to 15 per cent either side of a central rate, so Moscow has decided it has not devalued the rouble — simply widened the band it can trade in.

The markets were not impressed by such a transparent device. The rouble has plummeted, and Russia's voters will be equally dismissive of the semantic cover behind which the Kremlin and the Russian central bank are trying to hide their blushes.

Now that the rouble has fallen off the wall, however, the question is whether the king's men — Boris Yeltsin and his advisers, the International Monetary Fund and the Group of Seven industrialised countries — will be able to put Humpty Dumpty back together again.

The immediate prospects do not look promising. Devaluation, suspending debt repayments, restricting capital flows are, at best, palliatives. They will not suddenly make corporate Russia into a virtuous collective demanding to pay its taxes. Russian companies will not be able to launch an export drive to reverse the balance of payments on the back of a newly competitive exchange rate. Instead they will find trade finance even trickier.

Nor will devaluation strengthen the failing banking system. Russia's banks will find it harder and more expensive to raise the funds needed to meet foreign currency obligations. They will find queues outside their branches as anxious citizens rush to withdraw their savings before the roof caves in.

Western economists will doubtless applaud such "restructuring". Russia, they will say, needs a system where banks are more interested in assessing risk than in lending to their cronies.

True enough. But that will not be the spin imparted by those looking to succeed Mr Yeltsin. They will protest that Russia's woes are the result of economic incompetence in the Kremlin and the activities of international financiers. The implication will be that, given the right men at the top (or men of the right at the top) Russia would be able to take its rightful place in the world and not have to rely on strings-attached hand-outs from the IMF.

The message will get a ready audience among those whose savings are devalued or disappear with bust banks; and among those whose already miserable wages or pensions will be less than before.

Cut it how you will, Russia is in for a bumpy political and economic ride. Nor is it standing in isolation. Germany's banks, the biggest lenders to Russia, may have made heavy provision against their exposure — in the case of Commerzbank provisions are running at 60 per cent — but the fall-out from the Russian crisis will still be felt abroad. Coupled with the Asian collapse, it is likely to dent the global economic outlook.

The combination of Russian rouble roulette and the Asian contagion presents the greatest danger.

It is little more than 12 months since the devaluation of the Thai baht sparked the meltdown in Southeast Asia that later spread to other parts of the region, most dangerously to Japan and South Korea. Though a new crisis has begun, the old one is far from over: the speculators are still pecking away at the peg between the Hong Kong and US dollars. And European companies are beginning to complain, with mounting stridency, about dumping from Asia on the EU doorstep.

A couple of points to note. One beneficial effect of the Asian crisis has been to make US policy-makers reluctant to raise interest rates. Without events in Asia it is a fair bet that US rates (and most others) would be higher than they are today. But those lower rates are being paid for by a level of turbulence. The events in Russia can only add to that increasing feeling of insecurity. How long will it be before some of the funds which have poured into equities, seemingly without check, start looking for safe havens in the bond markets?

The second point is the effect the events of the last year will have on the citizens of those countries where the economies have been blasted apart. Economic advisers from the West will have a simple message. Reform, deregulate, open up your markets even more. Let global capitalism pour in.

Numbers up? A Moscow exchange office employee changes rates on display in the Russian capital on Monday PHOTOGRAPH: MIKHAIL METZEL

Eventually that might happen. But those who have suffered the consequences most directly may be inclined to cavil. Economic liberalism and the political liberalism with which it is closely associated are fine things. But there will be those — from Tokyo to Moscow, via Seoul, Jakarta and Bangkok — who will see it all another way. They will wonder whether the cure was worse than the illness.

George Soros's letter to the Financial Times last week, urging Russian devaluation, may have been one of the factors in bringing it about. But his earlier stricture, that too much untrammelled capitalism could tarnish the ideal of the open society, is just as sharp as his recent analysis of the need to devalue the rouble. Let us hope his concerns about the former are not so swiftly translated into actuality as the latter.

HOW did Russia reach this low so fast? It was only a month ago that Moscow trumpeted agreement with the IMF, the World Bank and Japan for a juicy new two-year, $22.6 billion loan to support the rouble.

Mr Yeltsin's friends in the Group of Seven leading industrial nations were well aware that the rouble had been put under pressure by the Asia-provoked collapse in oil prices and the flight by Western investors from emerging markets. They accepted the plaintive argument of Yeltsin's ministers that, if the rouble crashed in value, the sole economic achievements of his rule would be smashed, and the Yeltsin regime could be smashed along with it.

They came up with the money. Yet the very emergency the loan package was supposed to avert has come about.

The IMF thought that by offering fresh credit it would give investors the confidence to buy new bonds, at lower interest rates, which Moscow could use to redeem the old ones and still have money left to run the country. But according to Soros, the IMF ignored one key detail: Russian banks had not bought government bonds with their own money. In order to speculate on what was once a wildly profitable market, they had borrowed from each other. Far from buying new bonds at low interest rates, they have been trying to sell the old ones at any price in order to pay off their mutual debts.

Russia's neighbours offer no clear example to follow. Ukraine's President Leonid Kuchma has been more cautious over reform than Yeltsin, privatising little, blocking foreign investors — but Kiev is, if anything, in a worse economic bind than Moscow. In Belarus, President Alexander Lukashenko has followed the kind of neo-Soviet policies Russia's Communists would like to have seen in place, and Belarus's currency is now almost worthless.

The country which makes Russians most uncomfortable is Poland. The early wave of Western reformers who trickled into Russia, such as Jeffrey Sachs, were inspired by Polish acceptance of the Thatcherite approach and expected the same thing to happen in what they saw as "liberated" Russia. It did not. While the Poles, liberated from Russia, had a patriotic desire to emulate the West, who were the Russians to be liberated from? Themselves?

In Brief

BRITISH Petroleum propelled itself into the super league of the oil and chemicals industry by taking over American rival Amoco in an agreed $105 billion deal. If cleared by European Union competition authorities, the new company will become Britain's largest with a market value greater than the national output of Portugal.

INDONESIA started to reschedule its enormous debt mountain by suspending repayment of $1.2 billion of loans while denying that this constituted a default. It said the measure had been agreed with the International Monetary Fund.

THE UK government hit out at utility directors after figures were released showing that their average pay rise last year was 18 per cent and in some cases more than 40 per cent.

PRUDENTIAL sold its insurance operations in Australia and New Zealand for $800 million, prompting speculation that the UK's biggest insurance company is building up a war chest to make a major acquisition closer to home.

DIAMOND sales fell by 35 per cent in the first six months of this year, according to figures from De Beers. A collapse in demand from Japan — which before the crash accounted with the US for two-thirds of diamond jewellery sales — was to blame, it said.

SHARES in Virgin Express, Richard Branson's low-cost airline, fell to a record low after it issued a profits warning. The company was floated last year in Brussels and on the Nasdaq exchange in new York.

ROLLS-ROYCE has secured a $390 million order from American Airlines to supply its Trent 800 engines to power 15 Boeing 777 aircraft. It is already contracted to supply AA's initial batch of 19 Boeing 777s, starting in January.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates August 17	Sterling rates August 10
Australia	2.7268-2.7308	2.7258-2.7321
Austria	20.39-20.40	20.72-20.74
Belgium	59.71-59.82	59.81-59.90
Canada	2.4628-2.4650	2.4758-2.4778
Denmark	11.03-11.04	11.05-11.06
France	9.71-9.72	9.732-9.743
Germany	2.8981-2.9005	2.9029-2.9055
Hong Kong	12.52-12.53	12.63-12.64
Ireland	1.1542-1.1568	1.1540-1.1563
Italy	2,858-2,861	2,864-2,866
Japan	235.61-235.90	239.01-239.22
Netherlands	3.2682-3.2714	3.2733-3.2766
New Zealand	3.2106-3.2169	3.2085-3.2147
Norway	12.33-12.34	12.39-12.40
Portugal	296.46-296.87	296.66-297.19
Spain	245.87-246.09	246.32-246.57
Sweden	13.20-13.22	13.18-13.20
Switzerland	2,4290-2.4320	2.4378-2.4406
USA	1.6159-1.6168	1.6316-1.6324
ECU	1.4699-1.4717	1.4722-1.4740

FTSE100 Share Index down 120.4 at [illegible]. FTSE 250 index down 169.1 at 5136.8. Gold down $1.00 at [illegible].

The Washington Post

Talking Tough Is No Longer Enough

COMMENT
Jim Hoagland

AS PRESIDENT Clinton moves into a politically decisive week at home, his hopes that soft power would tame the post-Cold War world are also under strong challenge around the globe.

Foreign policy has played an important if unspotlighted role in sustaining the high popularity ratings that have been vital to Clinton as he battles Kenneth Starr's investigation of the Lewinsky allegations.

The Clinton presidency has been blessed with a relatively peaceful international environment. Clinton has infrequently used or even threatened to use force in protecting U.S. interests abroad, and Americans like him for that.

And the president, his aides and his foreign allies have often emphasized Clinton's skills in using "diplomacy backed by force" to settle international conflict.

That phrase has echoed through the administration's descriptions of how it handled problems as diverse as North Korea's effort to develop a nuclear arsenal, the dismantling of Haiti's junta, China's missile threats against Taiwan and Iraq's hiding of biological and chemical weapons. Clinton spokesmen have claimed this particular form of soft power as a trademark of this presidency.

But the terror bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, Saddam Hussein's breaking off U.N. arms inspections once again and the bloody pursuit by Slobodan Milosevic of continued Serb rule over Kosovo have demonstrated in recent weeks that other, brutal forms of power still count in world politics and will not be deterred by threats alone.

Clinton deserves praise, and popularity, for avoiding fighting where it was not necessary and minimizing violence where it was. His Vietnam-era wariness of the military has in some cases paid dividends.

But his administration can be faulted for making foreign policy look too easy by vaunting diplomacy backed by the threat of force so relentlessly. The American public has been left with the impression that the Iraqis, or the Serbs, or the other troublemakers of the moment, are almost certain to back down when the threat of overwhelming American power is delivered.

Examine the statements of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan last February after he talked Saddam into resuming (the now suspended) arms inspections, and Clinton's welcome of that agreement, and the logic behind that impression emerges.

Two enormous problems result from such high visibility reliance on the threat of force as the first line of diplomacy: It underestimates the force of the irrational in international politics. Saddam for one has shown that he cares nothing about the survival of his country if it is not directly linked to his survival as ruler. An Iraq that does not live up to his vision deserves to perish.

Milosevic is more calculating. But his calculation of Kosovo's importance to Serbia is different from that of any outsider's. He would no doubt absorb more punishment than this American president would deem logical or bearable and still fight on for Kosovo.

The Iraqi and Yugoslav dictators also illustrate the second, increasingly apparent shortcoming of making threat-based diplomacy the biggest arrow in the quiver: Clinton's threats have become less credible as he has become more distracted and embattled at home.

Saddam's decision to give Annan a temporary diplomatic victory in February was a tactical move. This summer the Iraqi decided that he did not in fact risk American retaliation for breaking off U.N. inspections, and the administration has publicly and ill-advisedly confirmed that.

The repeated warnings that NATO is going to get serious militarily in Kosovo have had the same effect. Milosevic is able to calibrate the bloodshed he inflicts to stay below the high threshold of U.S. threat turning to actual force.

These developments send a clear message: Leadership in foreign affairs is not easy. The American people cannot assume that threats backed up by hope work for very long. And they cannot let themselves be lulled into thinking that threats will relieve them of the obligation of protecting global stability with sacrifice when their interests are threatened.

Mourners at the memorial service for those killed in the Nairobi blast PHOTOGRAPH: JEAN-MARC BOUJOU

Kenyans Forget Their Tribal Divisions

Stephen Buckley in Nairobi

MINUTES after the explosion devastated the U.S. Embassy and neighboring buildings earlier this month, thousands of Kenyans scrambled to the scene, desperately clambering over wreckage to extract the living and the dead.

Within the hour, community groups across Nairobi hustled to organize themselves to gather aid for hospitals — food, mattresses, blankets and critical medical supplies.

That evening thousands of Kenyans clogged hospitals, waiting for hours to donate much-needed blood. "This bombing enabled many groups to get together in a way that is unprecedented," said Alnashir Visram, a Kenyan of Indian descent who heads the local Aga Khan Council, made up of followers of the Muslim leader. "The people's sympathy transcended race, tribe, creed, ideology. . . . Everyone is hoping this becomes a permanent feature of this society."

In a country long battered by ethnic strife, the cooperation among its people since the bomb blast has startled even Kenyans. For a week anyway, tribal and racial animus was overwhelmed by national horror and concern for the 247 killed and 5,000 or so injured in the explosion.

Many observers here said this nation has not come together like this since the day Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's first post-independence president, died in 1978. The country then defied predictions of chaos by remaining calm and allowing a smooth transition for then-Vice President Daniel arap Moi.

This time the tone was set moments after the bombing, when ordinary Kenyans rushed past ill-equipped and disorganized military and police to save those trapped in a mountainous mangle of concrete and steel.

Mwangi Ngaji, 24, heard the blast at his workplace three miles away. He dashed to a hospital near downtown, then took a bus that dropped him near the bomb scene. After grabbing a pair of white latex gloves from an ambulance, he ignored a police officer's orders and joined the crowd to search for bodies.

Yet rescue efforts by ordinary Kenyans have not overshadowed others' quieter contributions. Hospitals across the city saw lines of blood donors snake through their buildings the night of the August 7 blast.

Neighborhoods and churches and schools gathered to give blood. "I had to wait for three hours" to donate, said Kabando wa Kabando, 30, a policy researcher.

Many Kenyans said the response of the nation's Indians, known here as Asians, was especially heartening. Many Asians, who came to East Africa when Britain was a regional colonial power, are second- and third-generation Kenyans but are often seen as outsiders.

Asians, who make up less than 5 percent of the population but who dominate the business class, have usually supported Moi's regime and are known for paying lower-than-average wages. Just before last December's presidential election, thousands of Indians, expecting violence, prepared to flee to Britain, or send away their loved ones. A large percentage, no one knows precisely, reportedly hold British passports.

But when the bomb exploded, such divisions faded. Visram's Aga Khan Council immediately put out a call for food, medical supplies, anything that might help. By that evening, people had flooded the group with bread, milk, fruits, vegetables, mineral water, blankets, mattresses, bandages, disposable syringes; all told, 12 tons of food and medical supplies.

The question now is, How long will this last? President Moi and opposition leaders visited the bombing scene together last week. But voters wonder whether that political cooperation will extend to the rest of this fractious country's numerous problems — poverty, official corruption, unsafe roads, and ethnic tensions.

But for now, Kabando said, Kenyans are simply surprised and pleased with their response to this crisis. He said that Kenyans have learned that, "given a chance, the people can be leaders, in times of disaster, in times of tragedy."

Deceitful Diplomacy Must Be Exposed

EDITORIAL

FROM the start last February there was reason to fear that U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's deal with Saddam Hussein was nothing but a charade. Saddam Hussein would pretend to let U.N. inspectors do their jobs, and U.N. inspectors would go through the motions. Shackled by cumbersome new rules, and without the benefit of military pressure, they would find nothing. This arrangement would allow the United States to disassemble its armada in the Persian Gulf without embarrassment. It would also allow Saddam Hussein to maintain his capability to field biological, chemical and nuclear weapons.

But likewise from the very start, the Clinton administration roundly dismissed such suspicions, insisting instead that U.N. inspectors would now be better placed than ever to do their work. So it is doubly shocking to learn that the Clinton administration may have been not only an accomplice in the creation of a charade but, offstage, a leading player — in a role that, given its duplicity, would make the United States more culpable in some ways than those countries, such as China and Russia, that have overtly undermined the U.N. inspection regime.

We are referring here to news, reported sketchily in the Times of London and in alarming and well-documented detail by Barton Gellman of The Washington Post, that the Clinton administration secretly intervened for months to dissuade U.N. inspectors from carrying out surprise visits to suspicious sites. As long as the inspectors were providing ample warning to Iraq and were carrying out their mission encumbered by large entourages of diplomats and Iraqi officials — as long as they had no chance of success, in other words — the administration had no complaints. But when the U.N. team proposed taking action that might actually uncover evidence of Saddam Hussein's illicit weapons programs, the administration urged it to desist. And all the while the administration presented itself publicly as the champion of aggressive inspections.

What could account for such deceit? Maybe the administration truly believed the inspectors would be more successful if they remained, for a longer time, more circumspect. Maybe, less charitably, the administration just didn't want to face the consequences of an active U.N. search; maybe if more evidence of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons were found, the requisite response would be just too difficult, politically, diplomatically and militarily.

We can only speculate; administration officials so far have provided nothing but unhelpful non-denial denials, acknowledging "consultations" with U.N. inspectors but saying they never issued explicit orders.

If ever a foreign policy matter called for congressional inquiry, it is this alleged practice of deceitful diplomacy.

Swiss Banks Settle Over Holocaust Assets

John M. Goshko in New York

SWITZERLAND'S leading banks reached agreement with Jewish groups last week on a $1.25 billion settlement intended to end the battle that has raged intermittently since World War II over long-lost assets of Holocaust victims and their heirs.

The agreement, settling a class-action lawsuit out of court, is intended primarily to provide a lump sum payment for funds that were deposited in Swiss banks by Jews, most of whom later died in Nazi extermination camps. After the war, those who survived and heirs of those who perished found that the banks insisted on keeping these funds because the claimants lacked documentation to verify ownership of the accounts.

The settlement funds are to be paid out over three years, with the first installment of $250 million to be paid 90 days after Judge Edward Korman of U.S. District Court in Brooklyn formally approves the agreement. Korman has been presiding over the class-action suit. Subsequent payments, of $333 million each, will be made on the first, second and third anniversaries of Korman's approval.

The agreement, reached after months of acrimonious negotiation, also provides for dismissal of a separate suit against the Swiss central bank, insulates the banks from future law suits over unreturned assets and calls for an end to threats of sanctions against the banks by American states and municipalities.

"I hope this agreement will allow all of us to turn to the future. This is a historic agreement . . . that brings closure to a sad episode," Sen. Alfonse M. D'Amato, R-New York, said as he announced the accord at the federal court house in Brooklyn.

D'Amato presided over Senate hearings two years ago that exposed in detail the five-decade refusal of the Swiss banks to return the funds, as well as the banks' wartime dealings with Nazi Germany. Those hearings set in motion the chain of events that culminated in last week's settlement.

Flanking him at the announcement were lawyers for the 18,000 claimants in the $20 billion suit resolved by the agreement, representatives of Jewish organizations including the World Jewish Congress, which had been designated by the Israeli government to represent it in the negotiations, and lawyers for the banks. The only major player missing was Undersecretary of State Stuart E. Eizenstat, who organized and coordinated the negotiations on behalf of the Clinton administration.

Originally, the suit was directed against three banks: Credit Suisse, Union Bank of Switzerland and Swiss Bank Corp. However, Union Bank and Swiss Bank Corp. merged earlier this year to create the world's second biggest bank, and the merged entity — UBS AG — has assumed the liabilities of its two predecessors.

Over the past two years, frequent differences have arisen among the parties involved in the negotiations. For example, the U.S. government argued that it believed the banks and Swiss government were making a good-faith effort to resolve the situation, and it strongly opposed a drive, organized by New York City Comptroller Alan G. Hevesi, to impose local and state sanctions as a means of putting pressure on the Swiss.

New York City and New York state had plans to start phasing in sanctions against the banks on September 1 if a settlement was not reached. Several states, including California and Pennsylvania, announced they were considering similar action.

If such sanctions were introduced across a broad front, they could have cost Swiss companies substantial sums — in excess of $1 billion by some estimates. The threat so worried Swiss bankers and businessmen that Swiss President Flavio Cotti wrote a personal letter to President Clinton last month, appealing for him to intervene against the sanctions.

On June 19, the banks made an offer of $600 million to settle the claims. That was rejected out of hand as "insulting" by Jewish groups, who said that any settlement should be at least $1 billion.

In the end, a combination of factors — the insistence of Jewish groups, and claimants to keep pressing the banks, the sanctions threat and the almost continuous bad publicity that the situation was generating against the reputation of Switzerland and its banks — pushed the banks toward settlement.

In Brief

A FEDERAL appeals court has ruled that the Food and Drug Administration has no authority to regulate cigarettes, a major blow to the Clinton administration's attempts to curb youth smoking.

The three-judge panel of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals voted 2-1 to reverse a lower court ruling that had upheld the FDA's unprecedented attempt to gain jurisdiction over tobacco products. The appeals court ruled that the agency, which proposed its youth smoking rules in 1995, could not assert jurisdiction that Congress had never granted.

The decision brings the nation's struggle over tobacco essentially back to square one. Facing the prospect of FDA regulation, and a new wave of anti-tobacco lawsuits, the nation's largest tobacco companies last year reached a proposed settlement with state attorneys general and private attorneys to submit to advertising and marketing restrictions in return for a measure of protection from the onslaught of lawsuits it is facing. But legislation based on that proposal failed in Congress after the companies declared that it offered too little in return.

The Clinton administration said that it will appeal.

BOEING CO. announced plans to lay off as many as 28,000 workers, nearly 12 per cent of its workforce, over the next 18 months as part of a restructuring aimed at fixing its production problems and coping with slowing demand from Asia.

The moves, which the company had hinted at in recent months, include shifting some 737 jetliner assembly work to the former Douglas Aircraft factory in Long Beach, California, which was acquired in the 1997 purchase of McDonnell-Douglas Corp. Boeing will also consolidate other existing facilities as well as move its Information & Communications Systems business from Kent, Washington, to Anaheim, California.

Most of the layoffs will involve employees Boeing hired in the Seattle area to help it cope with a surge in demand for commercial aircraft in the past two years, as well as workers in Southern California and Missouri.

THE United Nations and the Taliban leadership of Afghanistan have reached a deal that could enable the return of nongovernmental foreign aid groups to the Afghan capital of Kabul, U.N. officials said last week.

But the agreement puts a number of restrictions on aid organizations. They include the Taliban's right to veto projects it does not want and acceptance by the organizations of the Taliban's insistence that they relocate their offices to a single compound. Defiance of the relocation order led the Taliban to expel nongovernmental organizations last month.

The sources said the accord left unresolved whether the Taliban will relax some of its strict rules against employment of women by the nongovernmental organizations.

Public Says: Enough of This Scandal

Dan Balz

HE OVERSTEPPED
SHE OVERSTAYED
HE OVERSAW
SHE OVERHEARD
SHE'S OVERJOYED
HE OVERREACHED
WE'RE OVERWROUGHT
IS IT OVER YET?
SHE OVERRULED
THEY OVERREACTED

ON THE EVE of President Clinton's testimony in the Monica S. Lewinsky investigation, the American people delivered a clear message to the scandal-obsessed city of Washington: Get this mess behind us.

Bombarbed by round-the-clock coverage and polled from every angle, Americans already have come to firm conclusions about the Lewinsky matter that pollsters say only a bombshell revelation is likely to change. They believe the president had sex with the former White House intern, they think he has lied about it and they still approve of the job he's doing running the country.

"They are more apt to judge the president as probably guilty and more likely, ironically, to think the Clinton presidency should not end as a result of his probable guilt," said Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center, whose most recent poll was taken last week.

The question White House advisers, elected politicians and party strategists were weighing last weekend is whether anything Clinton says this week, or anything independent counsel Kenneth W. Starr reports to Congress later, could alter what has been a consistent pattern of opinion throughout the ordeal.

Most analysts of public opinion say it will take more than a Clinton admission of a sexual relationship or positive DNA evidence on the dress Lewinsky turned over to prosecutors to jolt people enough to change their belief that the matter does not warrant impeachment proceedings in Congress.

But given that President Richard M. Nixon saw his approval rating more than cut in half in 1973 because of Watergate and that President Ronald Reagan's fell from 67 percent to 44 percent during the Iran-Contra scandal, Kohut warned: "I don't think we should take the public for granted and say nothing could change their minds about Bill Clinton on this. We've never been in a situation where a president has been put in this place."

Public conclusions about the basic elements of the investigation have produced a president who is believed by the public to be stronger than ever in some measures of leadership — and yet battered personally by an eroding judgment about his morals and honesty. Karlyn Bowman of the American Enterprise Institute put together a series of charts measuring what she labeled "The Character Gap" between Clinton's lofty approval ratings and growing public disgust with his personal behavior. A few snapshots of her findings are illustrative.

In the first year of Clinton's presidency, public belief in his honesty and trustworthiness ran about 6 to 9 percentage points above his job approval rating. In the latest Gallup poll, it runs 30 percentage points behind his job approval rating.

Throughout 1993 and 1994, the relationship between the president's job approval rating and the question of whether Clinton "shares your values" was at rough parity. Today job approval outstrips the other measure by at least 20 percentage points.

Bowman's analysis found one other striking example of how Americans judge Clinton. A question that has been used by pollsters during recent presidencies gives people four options for rating a president and his policies. They can say they like him personally and approve of his policies; like him personally but don't like his policies; dislike him personally but approve of his policies; and dislike him personally and disapprove of his policies.

For Clinton, a dramatically negative pattern has emerged. In an NBC News-Wall Street Journal poll last April, 33 percent of those surveyed said they liked Clinton personally and approved of his policies, while only 2 percent said they liked him personally and disliked his policies. But 45 percent, the largest single group, said that while they approved of his policies, they did not like Clinton personally.

Clinton's approval rating has remained strong for some obvious reasons, including the healthy economy. But Frank Newport, who directs the Gallup surveys, offered a novel theory as to why Clinton's approval rating has remained so buoyant throughout the Lewinsky investigation.

"It's Clinton's war," Newport said. He said the investigation — and the partisan conflict between the White House and Starr's team — have given Clinton "the environment he needed to get a positive evaluation, It's a perspective of separating the incident from how he's handling the incident. The public is giving him a lot of credit for how he's handling this incident."



A Titan 4A rocket, carrying an estimated $1 billion classified payload for the U.S. government, explodes moments after lift-off from Cape Canaveral, Florida last week PHOTOGRAPH: DUFFIN MCGEE

Satellite Flaw Distorts Warming Data

Joby Warrick

IT IS one of the most perplexing scientific questions of the global warming debate: If the planet is getting hotter, as many experts contend, why do satellites show Earth's atmosphere growing cooler?

The answer may have less to do with weather than with hardware and the quirkiness of satellite orbit. A pair of California scientists last week reported the discovery of a technical flaw that, when corrected, appears to reverse the "cooling effect" and undermine one of the main arguments of global warming skeptics.

The study, in last week's issue of Nature, concludes that temperatures above Earth actually are warming slightly, a finding that meshes with a century of land-based measurements that have shown a modest rise in global temperatures.

While the report does not settle many of the key issues in the climate debate it makes it harder for skeptics to credibly claim that the phenomenon isn't real, said James E. Hansen, director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies.

"Until now the [satellite] data have been the principal refuge for those who deny the reality of global warming," Hansen wrote in a commentary on the study by Frank J. Wentz and Matthias Schabel, both of Remote Sensing Systems in Santa Rosa, Calif. "We believe that warming trends are now sufficiently clear that the issue should no longer be whether global warming is occurring, but what is the rate."

Other scientists played down the significance of the finding. John Christy, one of two Alabama scientists who developed the method for tracking climate variation through satellites, said that the "cooling effect" identified by Wentz and Schabel "is real", but small.

"To imply . . . that this one factor invalidates the satellite data or significantly changes the climate trend charted by our research is an exaggeration," said Christy.

The dispute centers on a 20-year record of temperature readings from NASA weather satellites orbiting the Earth at the poles. Using microwave sensors, the satellites have measured temperature variation in the lower and middle troposphere, the layer of the atmosphere that extends from the surface to about six miles above Earth.

Computer models used by climatologists predict a gradual warming in both the lower troposphere and on Earth's surface because of a build-up of so-called greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide and other by-products of fossil fuel combustion. But while a number of surface measurements — including land, ocean and deep-ground temperatures — have risen over the past century, the satellite record for the last 20 years has conspicuously contradicted that trend. Christy and his colleagues found that atmospheric temperatures had cooled slightly between 1979 and 1997.

The pattern shifts abruptly in 1998 when temperatures soar to record levels, an effect that Christy attributes to El Nino.

The new study, however, contends that the satellite data are flawed. According to Wentz and Schabel, NASA's orbiting thermometers lose altitude by more than a mile as they circle the globe, a drop that can interfere with their ability to accurately measure temperatures near the Earth's surface.

When the drop in height is factored in, the adjusted figures are "in closer agreement with surface temperatures," he said.

Mexico's Wealthiest Tainted by Scandal

John Ward Anderson
In Mexico City

THE BILL has arrived for Mexico's botched 1994 peso devaluation, and it's a whopper — a $62 billion bank bail-out that is evolving into one of the biggest political scandals of President Ernesto Zedillo's administration.

The price tag alone — about 15 per cent of Mexico's annual gross domestic product — is giving many people a severe case of sticker shock in a country reeling from tight credit, deep budget cuts and plummeting oil revenues.

But even more explosive than the economic cost is the growing political scandal over who, potentially, could benefit from the bank rescue. At its simplest level, the question is whether some of the country's richest and most powerful people defaulted on loans that the government now proposes to cover.

Finance officials have refused to release the names of companies and individuals who defaulted on debts that the government took over under a program that kept Mexico's banking system from collapsing. The secrecy has fueled suspicion that the bank bailout amounts to a scam by power brokers in the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to line their own pockets and protect their friends. The scandal already has grazed Zedillo, the head of the central bank and several presidential hopefuls.

This month, officials of the leftist opposition Democratic Revolutionary Party released a list naming 310 people and companies who were issued more than $11 billion in loans now held by Mexico's bank bail-out agency, the Bank Savings Protection Fund. The list — which officials refused to authenticate — included four names from Forbes magazine's annual ranking of the world's billionaires; two members of the ruling party's 1988 presidential finance committee; and several bankers who were alleged to have lent themselves millions and then defaulted on the loans.

Officials cautioned that simply because a loan is now held by the bailout agency is not an indication that it is in default.

The list was culled from just five of the 18 private banks operating in Mexico at the time of the December 1994 peso devaluation. The opposition is demanding a full and open accounting of the entire bail-out.

"This is potentially explosive and devastating information," said Sen. Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, a leading independent politician who has been at the forefront of some of Mexico's most serious political corruption investigations.

At the same time, some analysts say the issue could become a powerful weapon against the ruling party in the 2000 presidential elections, and they have accused opposition politicians of waging a witch hunt.

A spokesman for Zedillo said the 1994 campaign was the fairest and most transparent ever and that its finances were "perfectly documented."

Analysts said that one of the ruling party's top officials, Bank of Mexico head and former finance secretary Guillermo Ortiz Martinez, who also has been mentioned as a presidential hopeful, may be one of the principal casualties of the growing scandal. Ortiz Martinez, a darling of Wall Street, was a key architect of Mexico's flawed 1991-92 bank privatization program, which many analysts now say was one of the causes of the banking crisis.

"This is no witch hunt," said Dolores Padierna, a Democratic Revolutionary Party member of Congress, who has led the call for a congressional investigation of the affair. "We want those responsible to pay for their corruption, inability, ineptitude. . . . They milked the banks until they left them dry."

Queen Vixen

Steven Moore

MARY BUTTS
Scenes from the Life
By Nathalie Blondel
McPherson and Co. 556pp. $35



ILLUSTRATION: JILL KARLA SCHWARZ

THE period between the two world wars produced a number of intriguing British and American women writers who never achieved the acclaim they deserved. Djuna Barnes eventually won a measure of posthumous fame, but too few readers today know about Olive Moore, Emily Holmes Coleman, Mina Loy, or Anna Kavan, all of whom published brilliant novels. These were unconventional, "difficult" women: They wrote about independence and madness, took drugs or indulged in other illicit behavior, and thumbed their noses at convention, both literary and domestic. Mary Butts could be the poster girl for this lost generation of vixens.

Don't be surprised if you haven't heard of her. Despite McPherson and Company's valiant reprint series — they've reissued all her books over the last seven years, and plan to bring out previously unpublished work — she is little more than a name even to most well-read people, and her books not easy to find.

In the first biography to be written about Butts, Nathalie Blondel (a professor at the University of the West of England) makes a strong case for Butts's importance, not only to the Modernist movement earlier this century but to many of today's feminist and environmental concerns. She achieves this by underscoring Butts's devotion to writing all her life, even when she was carrying on more like a rock star than a serious artist. Drugs, lesbianism, alcohol, witchcraft — she did it all, but in the service of her craft.

Mary Butts was born in 1890 into an aristocratic family living in Dorset, a charmed existence that was the subject of her posthumously published memoir, The Crystal Cabinet. She loved country life, but the charm wore off after her father died when she was 14. From that time on she had an acrimonious relationship with her mother.

Butts moved to London during World War I and worked for an organization that supported conscientious objectors, one of whom, future publisher John Rodker, became her first husband. By that time she was already at work on her first novel, Ashe Of Rings.

Together, Butts and Rodker became part of the Bloomsbury world — Wyndham Lewis painted her portrait, Pound and Eliot became her friends, as did eventually everybody who was anybody during that era — and her stories began appearing in the best little magazines. Her first book of stories appeared in 1923, her first novel in 1925 and a second novel in 1928. The critics were impressed, though a bit baffled by her unusual style.

But her personal life was less orderly. She and Rodker began drifting apart, but not before having a daughter, in whom Butts took little interest. She began experimenting with drugs and remained an addict all her life. She had a strong interest in the occult and was a firm believer in astral journeys, teleplasm, the fourth dimension, and other nonrational beliefs. (She eventually reverted to the Anglo-Catholicism of her childhood.) Despite her aristocratic background, she was frequently poor.

Her dissipated lifestyle took a turn for the better when she moved to Cornwall in 1930; though she was saddled with a new but alcoholic husband, the wild Cornish seacoast inspired a burst of creativity. More novels tumbled forth (including two set in ancient times: The Macedonian and Scenes From The Life Of Cleopatra), as did essays, stories, and book reviews. She was finishing her autobiography when she died in 1937, aged 46.

Blondel relates all this in great, sometimes overwhelming detail. She relies heavily on Butt's diaries and accounts by her contemporaries, so that much of her story is told by the actual participants. Blondel is very sympathetic to Butts but not to the point of overlooking her many shortcomings (especially her neglect of her daughter). Stella Bowen, Ford Madox Ford's lover, once described Butts as inhabiting a "cloud-cuckoo land of her own," a view Blondel occasionally agrees with, but there is no condescension from her toward Butts's varied beliefs. Her respect for Butts as a writer dominates all, a refreshing attitude at a time when many biographers seem bent on humiliating their subjects.

Anyone interested in the literary life of the 1920s will be fascinated by this book. It probably won't result in a rewriting of Modernism, but Mary Butts can no longer be dismissed in a footnote after this.

A Family's Journey From Pusan

Michael Stephens

ONE THOUSAND CHESTNUT TREES
A Novel of Korea
By Mira Stout
Riverhead. 319pp. $23.95

READING One Thousand Chestnut Trees, I am reminded of a time, living in Korea, when I played *paduk*. This is a board game in which one places black and white stones on a grid, the goal being to possess as many houses (grid interstices) as one can.

I thought I was doing quite well for an amateur because I claimed the middle of the board, house after house in my possession. What I hadn't realized is that the person I played against had greater ambitions than mine, and he had surrounded my houses with his stones, thus making all my property worthless.

That game taught me that things are never what you think they are. But it also showed me that one action often encapsulates another. One Thousand Chestnut Trees bears out that idea. It contains stories within stories within stories, each making a claim on our attention. All are framed by a story in the immediate world, as if that contained the seeds of these other tales.

Though uneven and overly ambitious, this first novel is saved by a long middle passage that may be one of the finest, most sensitive renderings of the Korean War that I've encountered in nearly three decades of reading about it. Even more compelling, that centerpiece is the story of an older woman, not someone from the author's generation. But let's go back to the beginning to make sense of this.

Anna is the child of a Vermont couple. Her father is an Irish-American painter from Boston; her mother is a Korean violinist. This is a generational story about Anna, her mother, and the two women's ancestors from the Korean world in this century.

The story begins in New York City in the late '80s, an artsy, frantic place where Anna lives and works, though she finds her life to be empty there. After being let go from her job, she decides to take a spiritual journey back to her mother's homeland in order to come to terms with that lost world, and so come to an understanding with her mother.

Mira Stout's story about Anna is a conventional enough coming-of-age saga. At times, I found her voice inconsistent, wavering between an arch, almost British cadence and usage while purporting to belong to a very American girl from New England. Also, I found it odd, if not disturbing, that Anna referred to her

This novel is saved by one of the finest renderings of the war I have encountered

mother's Asian family as "Orientals," a term that is currently under dispute.

That one word aside, this novel becomes more and more engaging as it progresses. For it is not really Anna's tale that is the linchpin of this novel, but rather her mother's story, that story within a story. This incredible tale, besides being framed by Anna's contemporary journey, is introduced by a story about one of the mother's male ancestors, who lived amid the Japanese occupation that started in 1910.

This ancestor tale is somewhat generic, as though its content were gleaned from a history book on Korea. Yet the title derives from this narrative: The Min clan's patriarch plants one thousand chestnut trees around a temple in the Sorak mountain range, one of the most distant, isolated places in South Korea. The point is to symbolize the clan's devotion to Korean culture, a world that was being stripped away, first by the 35-year Japanese occupation and then, later in the mother's story, by the North Korean invasions.

Finally, the story enters the mother's world, and that is when One Thousand Chestnut Trees breaks new territory. Myung-Ja (her mother) lived a life framed by war and Japanese occupation and then by a repetition of this fate with the Americans, Russians and Chinese as well as the North and South Korean armies during the Korean War. Yet Anna's mother is a gifted classical musician whose family flees south to Seoul. During the war they become displaced refugees, finally winding up in Taegu and Pusan, the most southern cities on the peninsula, and the last refuge from the storming red armies. Eventually, this gifted woman will leave Korea to study music abroad.

Because Anna's voice appears inconsistent at times, the mother's voice becomes the spine of this novel. Her mother's story will appeal not only to readers interested in Korea, particularly the war years, but also to anyone who wants to read about the human condition, its struggle and, ultimately, its resilience and triumph. War stories still are our most powerful myth-making machines.

Finally, what makes One Thousand Chestnut Trees so memorable is this mother's tale, because it is both real and heartbreaking. It's remarkable that Mira Stout, a writer obviously too young to have experienced the Korean War, so effectively evokes its terrifying details. I hope to read more from this gifted storyteller.

Einstein, My Father

Jay Parini

MRS. EINSTEIN
By Anna McGrail
Norton. 333 pp. $24.95

IMAGINE a novel that contains the following: "We had worked out that only one form of the metal — Uranium-235 — was going to be capable of sustaining a chain reaction. Only the U-235 nuclei were easily split, but they formed only one part in 300 of the metal. The U-238 nuclei, which formed the overwhelming bulk of the uranium, usually just absorbed anything that hit them. That was one of the reasons my calculations had been so awry."

This mind-boggling explanation occurs in the center of this astonishing novel by Anna McGrail, an English writer who has published one previous novel. In Mrs. Einstein she takes on the ambitious task of putting the history of modern science, and the discovery of the atomic bomb, at the center of a novel; theories of modern physics become, in effect, a literal and symbolic matrix that holds in place the unfolding story of McGrail's eponymous narrator, Lieserl Einstein.

The author has imagined a life obscured by history. Apparently Albert Einstein and his future wife, Mileva Maric, produced a girl called Lieserl in 1902, a year before they were married. The girl was given up for adoption, and her existence was not uncovered until 1986. Nothing much is known about her.

This was fertile ground for the right novelist, and McGrail is she. Her ample knowledge of modern physics, including the race to discover the atomic bomb, is evident here; indeed, she makes the quest for scientific knowledge absorbing as she imagines a course Lieserl's life might have taken, beginning with her restricted childhood on a remote Hungarian farm.

Then she discovers that her father is a scientist, concerned with gravity and light. Instinctively competitive, Lieserl says: "If they [gravity and light] were my father's chosen weapons, I had to know every single thing about them." Somewhat implausibly for an ill-educated country girl, she becomes in her own right a brilliant scientist, intent on beating her father to the punch on his intellectual quest. Her demonic goal is to use her scientific discoveries to create a bomb that will dismay Einstein, her pacifist father.

Mrs. Einstein describes Lieserl's bizarre, tortuous path toward her larger-than-life father, with whom she ultimately has a deathbed confrontation. Her physical journey takes her from a remote village in Hungary to Vienna (brilliantly evoked) during the First World War. Tutored by a charismatic German woman, who becomes a lifelong companion, she marries a Jewish businessman and has two children. After becoming a cutting-edge physicist in Nazi Germany, she experiences the death camps firsthand, then flees to the United States, where she gets involved in the Manhattan Project. McGrail describes this complex trajectory in remarkably authentic detail, although one has continually to suspend belief almost to the breaking point to imagine that Lieserl Einstein could have outmatched her genius-father on his great intellectual journey.

"In Science," Lieserl comments, "the only thing that distinguishes the past from the future is the accumulation of disorder. The more we go on, the more, despite our best efforts, things become disordered." This is certainly true of Lieserl's life, which in Anna McGrail's mythic telling represents all that has gone wrong in this unhappy century.

Floods threaten Asia's new tiger

ANALYSIS

Pierre-Antoine Delhommais

COULD a natural disaster help trigger off a worldwide monetary crash? The floods of the Yangtze river in China, which could, according to some estimates, knock as much as half a point off growth this year, have come at a bad moment for the Chinese government. They will aggravate the economic downturn already under way in China and jeopardise Beijing's ability to continue its policy of a strong yuan.

Although the yuan managed to avoid following other Asian currencies in their fall against the United States dollar, the Chinese economy did not escape the monetary turmoil that has now stricken the region for more than a year.

For one thing, the fall in consumption and industrial activity in countries such as South Korea and Indonesia resulted in slackening demand for Chinese products — half of China's exports go to Asian countries, and 20 per cent to Japan alone. On top of that, its competitiveness was seriously eroded as currencies in neighbouring countries plummeted.

As a result, Chinese exports grew by 9 per cent during the first half of 1998, as against almost 30 per cent in 1997. Experts at the French state savings bank, Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations (CDC), point out that "the contribution of China's foreign trade to growth has become negative".

After rising by 9.6 per cent in 1996 and by 8.8 per cent in 1997, gross domestic product (GDP) rose at an annual rate of only 7 per cent during the first six months of this year, thus falling short of the 8 per cent target set by the government.

As a result of this slowdown, public finances have careered out of control: state revenues increased at a rate of 7.7 per cent between January and May compared with the same period last year, well below the rate of 10.2 per cent forecast for the whole of 1998.

The decline in foreign trade is not the only factor that is acting as a brake on the Chinese economy. The current restructuring of state enterprises has resulted in colossal redundancies (14 million people laid off in 18 months), which have in turn depressed consumption: retail sales have risen at a rate of only 9 per cent, as against 10 per cent in 1997 and 13 per cent in 1996.

The government is also trying to overhaul a banking system which, like its Japanese counterpart, has virtually been brought to its knees by the volume of bad debts. Officially put at 5 per cent of GDP, they could in fact be closer to 20 per cent. This determination to stabilise the economy has resulted in a fall in the bank loan approvals (currently up by only 6 per cent, compared with an increase of 24 per cent in 1997).

Credit demand has been held down by a monetary policy which remains highly restrictive, despite a recent easing of regulations introduced by the central bank: allowing for a fall of more than 2 per cent in consumer prices, one-year interest rates in real terms (after discounting inflation) now stand at more than 10 per cent, a very high level that is a disincentive for companies and households to borrow.

So why does the government not bring interest rates down? "Even though the yuan is not convertible, China is subject to an interest rate constraint," say CDC analysts. "When domestic interest rates fall too low, particularly in relation to US rates, there are transfers into dollars, particularly on the part of exporters and joint venture companies."

Since the Chinese government is unable to use interest rates as a lever to stimulate economic activity, it has chosen to resort to the classic Keynesian device of reflating the economy by hugely increasing public spending, especially on infrastructure and building.

The governor of China's central bank has described this as a "New Deal" directly inspired by President Franklin Roosevelt's social and economic reform programme of the thirties: it will involve the spending of $1,000 billion over the next three years.

'Sit!'

There remains the key issue of the exchange rate. It could be argued that it is in Beijing's interest to devalue if it wishes to give its economy and its companies a shot in the arm. But such a strategy has several drawbacks, the most important being that in order to manufacture products for export China has to import large quantities of components, whose cost would increase if the yuan were devalued.

Chinese exports to the US and Europe remain buoyant. This would suggest that the Chinese economy is still competitive at world level and is suffering mainly from the recession in the rest of Asia. A devaluation of the yuan would trigger a further devaluationist spiral in Asia and thus aggravate the recession.

If the Chinese currency fell in value it would almost automatically drag the Hong Kong dollar down with it. That would risk causing a very serious financial crisis in the former British colony and a massive outflow of international capital, which Beijing vitally needs for its own industrial development.

The question of whether or not to devalue the yuan is more political than economic, according to CDC experts. At a technical level, the convertibility of the yuan is strictly limited, which means that it cannot be subjected to massive speculative attacks. Beijing also has very large foreign exchange reserves (more than $140 billion).

A devaluation of the yuan would not only be fraught with economic and financial uncertainties. It would be politically risky and could cause the Chinese government to lose some of its monetary respectability.

At a time when the Japanese economy is on the rocks and the celebrated Asian tigers are on the brink of bankruptcy, China has emerged in Western eyes as the only bulwark of stability in Asia.

The Chinese government is aware that its success in weathering the monetary storm in the region and in maintaining the yuan-dollar parity has hoisted China to the rank of a leading world economic and monetary power. The question is: how long will its determination to assume a new international respectability survive in a depressed economic context?

(August 12)

Turks see no end to war with Kurds

Nicole Pope in Istanbul

THE murderous and sometimes forgotten war between the Turkish government and Kurdish separatists in Anatolia, in southeastern Turkey, entered its 15th year on August 15. Despite optimistic communiqués from the Turkish civilian and military authorities, which regularly announce the annihilation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), clashes between Kurdish rebels and government forces continue to claim victims.

It is true that the security situation in cities is better than before. A few years ago Diyarbakir would turn into a ghost town at nightfall; the climate there has now improved enough for its inhabitants to take advantage of summer evenings in parks and open-air cafés. But the state of play in the countryside remains difficult to assess.

The official lists of casualties alone show that the situation is far from encouraging. On July 14, government forces suffered their heaviest losses of the past few years — 22 dead — in clashes that lasted several hours. On August 5, the prefecture of the region, which is under emergency rule, announced that 165 Kurdish fighters had been killed in the course of a vast offensive which was launched after a PKK rocket attack on Turkish positions, which spilled over into Iraq.

Many other skirmishes, all of which caused heavy loss of life, have taken place along the Turkish-Iraqi border and in the region where Iraq, Turkey and Iran meet.

According to the authorities, five civilians were killed by Kurdish guerrillas in the eastern province of Erzurum last month. In another eastern province, Van, the mayor of Bahcesaray was released on August 11, six days after having been kidnapped by the PKK. In the same region, another mayor was less fortunate: he died in a rebel attack.

The Turkish authorities have also held the PKK responsible for a raid on a mountain hotel in Uzungöl, a tourist area near the Black Sea. The hotel owner was killed in the attack.

These reports would tend to confirm that, although Kurdish activists seem to have lost some of their clout in the southeast, the PKK and small far-left groups that have sided with it are now active in the north of the country, which is far from the main Kurdish areas.

Although the war has so far claimed 28,000 lives, no end is in sight. In the past few months, the authorities seem to have cracked down even more fiercely: the human rights campaigner, Akin Birdal, confined to a wheelchair after an attempt on his life three months ago, was recently given a one-year prison sentence for merely having given a speech calling for a negotiated peace.

Lack of stability in the region continues to hamper its economic development. Poverty, in its turn, provides an ideal breeding ground for rebellion among an embittered and desperate generation of young people. Turkey does not yet seem ready to snap out of this vicious circle, despite the very high financial and human cost it entails.

(August 14)

Washington pays for supping with Islamists

EDITORIAL

THERE would not at first sight seem to be much connection between the military successes of the ultra-Islamist Taliban militia in Afghanistan over the past few days and the anti-American bomb attacks in Kenya and Tanzania. But on closer inspection it is possible to detect, behind the two events, hints of the dangerous game Washington has been playing with Islamic fundamentalists.

The very manner in which one of the last conflicts of the cold war was resolved is now fuelling the campaign of terror waged by certain Islamic fundamentalist groups against the United States.

The Soviet army was defeated in Afghanistan by mojahedin groups that were armed and financed by the US. Once they had won, the various groups, most of whom were Islamic fundamentalists, tirelessly fought each other. They caused immense suffering among the Afghan population and, in so doing, opened the way for the Taliban, who rank among the most retrograde of Islamists.

The Taliban were supported by two allies of the US, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Washington fleetingly adopted a rather indulgent attitude towards them on the grounds that they were the only people — something which could, alas, prove to be true — capable of restoring order in a country that was likely to play a key role in the export of oil from the former Soviet countries of Asia.

The trouble is that, true to their ideology, the Taliban have also given refuge in Afghanistan to one of the people thought to be behind the Nairobi and Dar es Salaam bombings. The wealthy Saudi businessman, Oussama bin Ladin, embodies the militant kind of Islamism that was spawned by the Afghan-Soviet war and now sees the US as guilty of every crime in the book.

Bin Ladin, was one of the heroes of the Afghan guerrilla war against the Soviet Union. He was both a fighter, a financier and a recruiting officer — with the approval and backing of the CIA.

After the Afghan war, some of the Arab-Muslim international brigades that had mobilised to combat the Soviet army formed the military backbone of Islamist movements in many Arab countries, from Algeria to Egypt — often with the financial support, from both private and government sources, of Saudi Arabia, one of the US's main allies in the Middle East.

When Bin Ladin redirected his religious fanaticism against Washington, he was stripped of his Saudi nationality. However, he continued to keep in close touch with Riyadh.

Many terrorist attacks could well turn out to be the work of "independent" micro-factions like Bin Ladin's rather than of states such as Iran or Sudan. The main lesson to be learnt from all this is, of course, that those who sup with radical Islamists must have a long spoon.

Another conclusion to be drawn is that the idea that my enemy's enemies are necessarily my friends is usually a very shortsighted form of Realpolitik. In this particular case the US, in its dealings with both Riyadh and Kabul, has played the role of sorcerer's apprentice.

(August 13)

France's Socialist prime minister has been far more effective in breaking up state enterprises than his conservative predecessor, writes **Claire Blandin**

Privatisation comes easily to Jospin



ONE of the major paradoxes of Lionel Jospin's stint as French prime minister has been that he, a Socialist, has successfully privatised where his conservative predecessor, Alain Juppé, failed. He has done so by taking the bull by the horns on the political, social and industrial fronts.

With privatisation as in other areas, Jospin has applied his now familiar combination of consensus-seeking and pragmatism. He has also implemented an industrial strategy with a determination and a vision that few suspected he possessed.

When he was in opposition, Jospin made no secret of his hostility to privatisation, even though the issue had long since moved out of the ideological arena. Before the May 1997 general election that brought him to power, he said he thought Thomson, Air France and France Télécom should remain in public hands. Once he took up office he shifted his stance appreciably. In his general policy statement, he already admitted that "adjustments" would be necessary.

But he still had to get that shift of position accepted by the Communists in his coalition government, and especially by his transport minister, Jean-Claude Gayssot. There was a moment of doubt when the Air France dossier became contentious (the airline's boss, Christian Blanc, resigned because he could not extract a promise from Jospin that the company would be privatised).

But the air soon cleared as Jospin skilfully managed to convince his Communist allies that state-owned companies should be eased into the private sector. For form's sake, the government avoided using the term "privatisation", preferring instead the "selling off of equity." That enabled Gayssot to say he would not be the minister who privatised Air France.

In the case of Aerospatiale, the pill was harder to swallow: the government's stake in the company dropped below the 50 per cent mark. But Jospin, pointing to the fact that such European partners as British Aerospace and the German company, Dasa, were reluctant to go into partnership with state-owned companies, succeeded in convincing the Communists that France would be marginalised unless Aerospatiale teamed up with its British and German counterparts.

The communist daily, L'Humanité, denounced the climate of uncertainty hanging over one of France's flagship industries. But the carping stopped there.

Jospin also had to deal with the social aspect. When in opposition, the left unhesitatingly whipped up trade union resentment when Juppé decided to privatise France Télécom and the CIC bank. The fact that it later came to power was no guarantee that the unions would approve the handover.

Here again, Jospin acted with great tact, getting former minister Michel Delebarre to arrange meetings between various ministers — including Jospin himself — and union representatives.

But consensus-seeking does not necessarily change the fundamental parameters: no one seriously thought that Delebarre's round of consultations would actually jeopardise the privatisation of France Télécom. But the ploy went down well with public opinion and the employees concerned, and marked a sharp contrast with Juppé's secretive, arrogant and uncommunicative style.

And while the "Jospin method" worked, he also had precious allies in the shape of dwindling unemployment, a return to growth and a booming stock market. France Télécom employees, whose shares have risen by 140 per cent since they were given a stake in the company, certainly have little to complain about.

Then there was the industrial part of the equation. Political consensus and social dialogue would be no more than an ingenious device if they served only to get the public to approve financial transactions. Even though the government did not turn up its nose at the financial advantage of selling state-owned companies to the private sector, that aspect did not fundamentally underpin its approach.

People had made Jospin out to be someone with a dogmatic vision of the world. Events very soon showed that he was not afraid to look the economic facts in the face. Aware that France Télécom, Air France, Thomson and Aerospatiale were now having to survive in the hostile environment of world competition, he quickly changed his tune. Public ownership, once a lifesaver for French companies with little equity capital, threatened to isolate France in the big industrial ball game, notably in defence electronics and aeronautics.

But it is a mystery why successive French governments have proved unable to apply the same logical methods to the restructuring of banks and insurance companies, despite being a leading shareholder in them.

Two major problems remain: what should be done with Crédit Foncier and Crédit Lyonnais? The industrial relations aspect, which has so far loomed large in negotiations, may cramp the government's thinking on the issue. Should restructuring be an all-French affair, or should the banks' equity be offered to French and foreign partners? Caught between the unions and Brussels, which zealously ensures that the rules of competition are observed, the government has little room for manoeuvre.

The Socialists have successfully restructured stricken industrial groups that had become the state's responsibility following nationalisation: now back in the private sector, companies like Usinor, Rhodia, Atochem and Pechiney are leaders in their respective fields.

By using a tool appropriate to modern economies — privatisation — the Socialists have demonstrated that they do indeed have a veritable industrial policy, one which has been shorn of dogma and now has an added European dimension.

(August 7)

Will Kohl be Germany's Comeback Kid?

Arnaud Leparmentier in Bonn

DO CHANCELLOR Helmut Kohl and the Christian Democrats (CDU) still have a chance of winning Germany's general election on September 27? The 8 per cent lead which his Social Democrat (SPD) rival, Gerhard Schröder, had in June has now been shaved down to 3 per cent, according to a poll published on August 10 by the weekly Der Spiegel.

The CDU's ratings began to plummet after Schröder's spectacular victory at the Lower Saxony regional election of March 1. In May, Kohl's chances were written off: at the regional election in Saxony-Anhalt (formerly in East Germany), his party got only a miserable 22 per cent, a drop of 12 per cent compared with the 1994 election.

The right's comeback is due mainly to an improved economic situation and falling unemployment: the number of jobless has dwindled by 300,000 since its record level at the end of 1997; and the number of Germans who regard the economic situation as good has risen to 43 per cent, a leap of 12 per cent in one month.

It is true that 74 per cent of Germans are still unhappy with the way they are being governed, but for the first time since February they believe the CDU is better equipped to solve their problems than the SPD.

They have also become less Eurosceptic, a factor that can only help the pro-European Kohl in the battle with his rival, who long had doubts about the virtues of a single currency.

This shift in public opinion could result in Kohl's ratings continuing to rise in the next few weeks. Whether it will enable him to snatch a last-minute victory, as he did in 1994, is another matter.

An increasing number of analysts in Bonn think Germany will be ruled by a grand coalition between the SPD and the CDU, which will have the joint task of carrying out the fiscal, social and institutional reforms Germany needs. Kohl will also step down.

According to that theory, if the SPD got the biggest share of the vote, the coalition would be led by Schröder. If the CDU came top, Kohl's chosen successor, Wolfgang Schäuble, would probably become chancellor, despite being confined to a wheelchair since an attempt on his life in 1990.

The other possibility would be a coalition between the SPD and the Greens. But only a quarter of the population now favours such a solution, as against 32 per cent in March. The number of people who say they will vote Green has slumped from 12 per cent at the beginning of the year to 6 per cent.

The Greens recently discredited themselves by making a number of wild demands — and openly disagreeing among themselves: they wanted petrol prices to go up to 5DM ($2.80) per litre, a 100kph motorway speed limit, German holidaymakers to be restricted to one plane flight every five years, Nato to be broken up, the German army to be halved in size, and military service and life imprisonment to be abolished.

The Greens are now not even certain of achieving the 5 per cent showing they need in order to be represented in parliament.

(August 11)

Fat brats give China cause for concern

Frédéric Bobin in Beijing

A STRIKING photograph recently appeared on the front page of several Chinese newspapers: it showed a group of overweight Shanghai schoolchildren awaiting orders at a summer camp. Squeezed into tight-fitting camouflage dress, with their paratrooper caps rammed down over their bulging necks and their water flasks at the ready, they would soon be sweating it out on forest or mountain tracks.

These martial establishments are known as "suffering camps". Parents are prepared to cough up the equivalent of $50 a week — or a quarter of a civil servant's monthly salary — to put their chubby kids through the mill.

In Shanghai, it is estimated that 20 per cent of children are overfed and 11 per cent obese. That is the downside of the general rise in the standard of living in China and above all, of the government's "single child" policy, which encourages parents to give in to the slightest whim of their darling little cherubs.

A visit to one of the fast food joints in Beijing or Shanghai, where demanding toddlers order a succession of hamburgers and ice-creams, says more about the way contemporary China is going than any amount of in-depth analysis. According to the state statistics office, children gobble up a quarter of the family budget in large cities.

This is an issue that has begun to exercise the minds of educationists. They worry about the state of mind of the "little emperors", as they are nicknamed here, when they grow up. The older ones already experience difficulties when they are called up for military service.

The People's Liberation Army daily newspaper tells the story of a recruit who hid his festering socks under his mattress for three weeks because he did not know how to wash them. He had been spoilt at home and had never had to fend for himself.

To make up for their laxity, parents like to subject their kids to some form of "virile" character-building experience. Beijing's N... School has introduced a "boy's day" during which the children chant the following mantra: "We are men, we are brave, we assume our responsibilities, we shall accomplish historic missions."

A nursery school in Chengdu, in Sichuan province, has adopted the Japanese tradition of ice-cold showers. It also organises "endurance outings", during which pupils are urged to walk barefoot on pebbles, carry heavy objects and climb mountains.

Just before the summer, a travel agency offered a package that would enable kids "to share the life of a farmer's son" — a quaint idea 30 years after the Cultural Revolution, when young city-dwellers were exiled en masse to the countryside.

(July 31)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani





CLASSIFIED

CAR HIRE



These photographs were taken by Tom Stoddart of IPG at the Médecins Sans Frontières feeding station at Ajiep in southern Sudan. Anti-clockwise from top: A child who has waited for hours looks pitifully at a local rich man who has just taken a bag of maize from him; two people watch as a body is brought unceremoniously for burial; a young child

Victims of Sudan's pitiless war

Victoria Brittain

A *CEASEFIRE* in Sudan's civil war has given new access to aid for thousands of desperate refugees.

The three-month truce between the Islamic government in Khartoum and the Sudan People's Liberation Army has opened the airstrip at Ajiep in the south where people have gathered for months struggling to survive on inadequate airdrops.

Elsewhere in the south a convoy of river barges carrying emergency food supplies has begun a six-week journey down the Nile.

But the aid has come too late for unknown thousands of other displaced people in many such rough, ill-equipped camps across the region. Aid workers fear that the high death toll at Ajiep suggests that many other camps are also in the grip of a catastrophe.

The refugees, mostly from generations of Dinka cattle-herding families, are the usually unseen victims of a pitiless war driven by regional and geo-political interests which go far beyond Sudan.

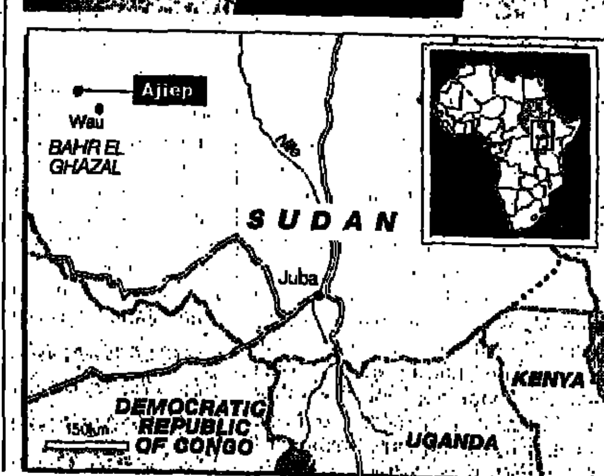
The United States has declared Sudan a terrorist state, while Eritrea, Ethiopia, and especially Uganda, have all been destabilised for years by Sudan's proxy armies.

The Dinka in Ajiep have lost their cattle, their villages, schools and clinics. They have been driven to walk for days, weeks or months, searching for food and fleeing a war waged against them from Khartoum by air and land.

Their traditional world of cattle camps, elaborate rituals and careful ornamentation is lost for ever. The potential oil riches which might have brought them into the modern world are more remote than ever.

Médecins Sans Frontières credit card hotline (UK only) 0800 200 222; or call (+44) 171-713 5600. Unicef credit card hotline (+44) (0)117-976 7880





He spent six months in a British prison for offences against the Official Secrets Act, the first intelligence agent prosecuted in 36 years. We are forbidden to show his face. Here, **Richard Tomlinson**, now in New Zealand, breaks his silence about jail and the harsh system that has hounded him around the world

Spies, lies and my feud with MI6

"OI! *YOU'RE* Tomlinson aren't you — the spy fella." A meaty hand clasped me on the shoulder and spun me round. I braced myself for trouble, not knowing what reception to expect from fellow inmates. Would I be regarded as just another criminal or "scuzzer" or as a "nonce" — a convicted police officer or prison warden — and subjected to intimidation and beatings? In fact my accoster just wanted to shake my hand. "It's a bloody liberty what they done to you," he said.

In the peculiar hierarchy that exists among prisoners, I was rapidly ensconced near the top of the pile, alongside armed bank robbers and master fraudsters. My crime gained kudos because it had pricked the skin of the hated establishment.

Earlier this year I spent six months in Belmarsh Prison, south-east London, courtesy of Her Majesty. My sin? Breaking the Official Secrets Act. I was the first MI6 agent to be prosecuted for secrets offences since George Blake 36 years ago. Blake was spying for the Soviets; all I had done was provide a synopsis for a book to an Australian publisher which I contended at my trial, and I contend still, posed no substantial risk to British national security.

My time behind bars was made more palatable by the unexpected support I was given by some of the country's most hardened criminals. They took me under their wing, regarding me as an asset because of my knowledge of the workings of the intelligence services. We held daily one-hour sessions in the exercise yard, like post-operational debriefing sessions. "How do I spot police surveillance?", "How do I tell if my phone is tapped?", "What's better, the Uzi or the Heckler & Koch?" were the sorts of questions fired at me. In return I was showered with favours, tips, even offers of drugs.

My quasi-celebrity status in jail made my time a little easier, and, on occasion, even amusing. But prison was still a desperately miserable experience. The biggest enemy was boredom. Locked up in a 12ft by 6ft cell on average 21 hours a day, I sank into long periods of depression. I found it impossible to concentrate even on the most page-turning book for more than a few hours. Computer chess helped a bit, and I set myself personal targets such as memorising lists of irregular German verbs. But always the deep anger would well up in me, fuelled by resentment at the circumstances that had led to my imprisonment.

How could MI6 refuse to allow me to take it to an industrial tribunal on the grounds that a court hearing would "prejudice national security", when it subsequently had no qualms about taking me to court when the boot was on the other foot? What sheer hypocrisy. If it had conceded to an industrial tribunal I would never have found myself in the company of some of Britain's most dangerous criminals, and it would never have had to endure the adverse publicity of my arrest, trial and imprisonment. Even as my sentence was drawing to an end I felt this injustice intensely.

When I was dismissed from MI6 in 1995, I told the head of the personnel department that I would pursue a claim for unfair dismissal. He replied: "There's no point in doing that, because nobody can tell the Chief [of the Secret Intelligence Service] what to do."

These words, from a senior officer, summarised the fundamental problem with the intelligence services. There is a deep-rooted belief within the services that, should a policy decision or operation go wrong, nobody will be held ultimately responsible. The service will always be able to hide behind the catch-all veil of secrecy provided by the Official Secrets Act or, if the heat really builds up, a Public Interest Immunity Certificate.

This lack of accountability at the top of the service cascades downwards. The decisions of even junior officers are accepted without rigorous examination by their line managers simply because the line manager knows that he will not be held accountable by his own senior officer. This loose decision-making structure results in some catastrophic operational disasters and, in extreme cases, loss of life.

It is also a fertile breeding ground for corruption. While most MI6 officers are principled, honest and hard-working, some succumb to temptation, knowing they will be immune from legal action. One officer profited handsomely from selling made-to-order passports to London's criminal underworld. Another paid for his divorce by inventing a fictitious agent, sending Whitehall a steady stream of intelligence from this imaginary agent (which he had copied from the pages of the Economist) and then pocketing the agent's salary.

For many years MI5 and MI6 have avoided the streamlining that all other government departments have undergone by arguing that detailed inquisition by government spending committees would prejudice their operational security. The result is a structure that would provide a theme park for management consultancies.

Why, for example, keep MI5 and MI6 as separate agencies? There is substantial overlap between the two. Both keep large libraries which frequently each contain a file on the same individual, so a conscientious officer must traipse across to the sister service. There is often fighting between the two agencies over who should have primacy over a particular target or operation. Arbitrary ground rules are sometimes brokered between warring departments, and communication is desperately poor. Paperwork can take weeks to travel the few hundred yards between Millbank and Vauxhall Cross. There is remarkably little cross-fertilisation of ideas, operational co-ordination or even socialising between the two. Indeed, when I spoke briefly by telephone to David Shayler the day before his arrest in Paris for alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Act, I joked tongue-in-cheek that it was only the second occasion I had spoken to an MI5 officer.



The man who knew too much . . . Tomlinson looking out over Auckland harbour PHOTOGRAPH: ROSS SETFORD

Most MI6 officers have little idea how to manage a budget, and even less incentive to manage it well. There are many cases of profligate waste of taxpayers' money. One department realised in February that it had only spent a fraction of its annual budget. When it dawned that if all the money was not spent by April the budget for the following year would be slashed, the department feverishly devised and rehearsed a complicated paramilitary operation which had no chance of being authorised.

THE intelligence services have managed to get away with such shoddy practices for so long because they have cultivated an air of mystique and importance around their work. This is far removed from reality. SIS (MI6) devotes considerable resources to lobbying its position in Whitehall, and has a specialist department whose role is to spin-doctor the media by wining and dining favoured journalists and editors. As a result, many senior Whitehall officials, MPs, editors and even judges hold MI6 in awe without having any understanding of the reality of its abilities and activities.

The draconian, catch-all nature of the Official Secrets Act is also used to prolong this myth. Under it, people have been prosecuted for activities which most objective observers would regard as utterly anodyne.

At my own trial last year, MI6 alleged that I had "endangered the lives of agents" and I received a 12-month sentence. In reality, the synopsis had been read by only one person, who had then left it to gather dust in a filing cabinet.

Such disproportionate punishments help to cultivate in the minds of the public the myth that intelligence work is somehow of crucial importance to the fabric of the nation, whereas in reality it is not much more than a rather inefficient government news agency.

And then there's the Official Secrets Act itself. It makes no distinction between revelations that are genuinely sensitive and those which are firmly in the public interest. Despite Britain's supposed commitment to free speech, I have been forced to move to New Zealand in order to publicly criticise a small part of the British government.

So what is to be done? The intelligence service needs an overhaul, starting from the top. Let's replace the Joint Intelligence Committee — a crusty, self-serving old-boy network of admirals, generals and civil servants — with a parliamentary sub-committee, so that intelligence targets, priorities and budgets are all controlled through the democratic process. Such systems are used to control the intelligence services of the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand without prejudicing national or operational security.

Next, MI5 and MI6 should be streamlined into one organisation, directly accountable to that sub-committee. The head of this new agency should be held directly responsible for any failures within the agency. He or she should preferably be appointed from outside the intelligence service so that the inbred complacency of current senior officers is swept aside.

Finally, the Official Secrets Act should be reformed so that it protects the identities of agents and ongoing operations, but allows open inquisition into issues of legitimate public interest. Breaches of this new act should be punishable in proportion to the direct consequences of the offence, not according to fanciful speculation about the potential consequences of the leak. And Public Interest Immunity Certificates should be permanently banned.

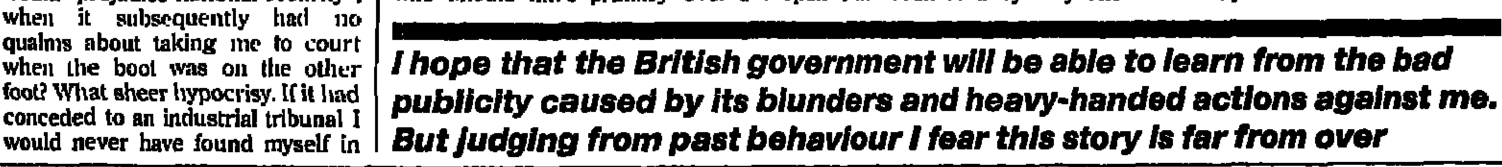
These reforms would quickly end all the errors, abuses of power, inefficiency and corruption which are currently endemic in our intelligence services. They would also put an end to the need for people like David Shayler and myself: whistleblowers who feel they have no legal channels through which to raise very real fears about what MI5 and MI6 are up to. In any case, with open and demystified services, nobody would pay whistleblowers the slightest bit of attention.

In the end I learned how to survive the Belmarsh prison regime. I chose to spend my two hours of "work" a day in the computer labs where I could write personal letters or design posters for the prison to publicise new regulations or educational courses.

WE ALSO had an hour's exercise. I trained ferociously on the rowing machine in the prison gym — it was the best therapy I found for my pent-up anger and frustration. I became fanatical about it, trying each day to break the previous day's record. It was my only means of salvaging any sense of purpose or achievement out of those six barren months in jail. (By the end of my sentence I had broken the prison service record.)

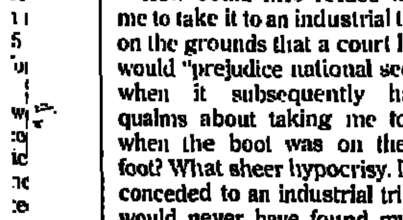
I don't look back on my time in jail now with anger or resentment. I broke the law, and paid the penalty. However, I do still resent the fact that MI6 officers lied to justify my dismissal, then used the Official Secrets Act to cover their dishonesty. Rather than question the judgment and integrity of the service itself, they chose the cowardly option of pursuing a case against me — a move symptomatic, in my view, of the malaise of complacency at the heart of the service.

Today, I'm still nursing a broken rib from my arrest in Paris. I have yet to recover my computer equipment seized by the French police and by the authorities here in New Zealand after my room was searched. And with injunctions hanging over me seemingly wherever I go, my future looks uncertain. I hope that the British government will be able to learn from the bad publicity caused by its extraordinary blunders and heavy-handed actions against me But judging from past behaviour I fear this story is far from over.



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The Guardian has not paid Richard Tomlinson for this article. At his request a donation has been made to the charity, Liberty (formerly the National Council for Civil Liberties)



Letter from Mali Robert Lacville

Proverbial wisdom

MY OLD friend Souleyman Touray said: "I have just understood something my grandfather told me, some 30 years ago." Souley's grandfather was a speaker of proverbs and a famous hippo-hunter who died at the hands (or, rather, at the teeth) of a hippo. He had been a spiritual leader and source of wisdom for the whole community — until the hippo got him.

All elders and community leaders speak in proverbs and parables. I love them. Proverbs are very picturesque in translated language, but they often make it horrendously difficult to understand what elders are actually saying. First you have to understand the proverb; next you have to understand what it means. And even then you are not out of the maul: for behind the meaning lies a wisdom. The best proverbs have multiple meanings with varying interpretations and wisdoms. All this is part of West Africans' love of word-play and debate. It explains why it took Souleyman 30 years to understand his grandfather's wise advice. And it goes some way towards excusing strangers like me who have difficulty in mastering African languages.

African conversation is full of enigmatic observations. Silence is admired as much as proverbs. Silence is also a sign of wisdom. Once wisdom is dispensed, elders usually relapse into silence. Village conversation is punctuated with companionable silence and thoughtfulness. If a younger person does venture to ask the meaning of a proverb, the usual response is: "May God give you long life, my son!" Time, experience, and your own growing wisdom may allow you to understand the meaning some day.

African proverbs often use animals. Here are a couple of examples from the Dogon country on Mali's eastern border, home of famous animal masks and ancestor death dances. The symbol of Dogon culture is the kanaga, a mask which represents the antelope. The dancers hold the mask in their teeth, sweeping their bodies down and round so that the antlers brush the dust in front of them. At the same time, the mask represents the universe as perceived by the Dogons, a unity between sky and earth, between those who are here, those who came before us and those who are yet to come. In Africa, there is no fear of death because life is part of a continuous birth.

The Dogon village is ruled by the ancestors. Their venerated remains are pulled up the cliff and laid to rest in caves, or in the troglodyte dwellings of the Pygmies who once lived in these cliffs. The oldest man in the community, the Hogon, also lives up in the cliff: "He is so old, he is almost dead," a younger Dogon once explained to me, with awe in his voice. Once the Hogon is up there, he never comes down. Other elders climb up the cliff to consult him and bring down his instructions: an agreeable example of African constitutional monarchy, so much more peaceful than dealing with elected presidents!

When he is not receiving visits, the Hogon spends his time in meditation and looks after the ancestor fetishes. Or he sleeps. Once each day, an elderly woman takes food up to the old man. Who looks after the Hogon? I wondered. "He never washes," I was told. "A serpent licks him clean." My informant was amazed by the magic of the serpent. With the wisdom of 40 years in Africa, I know that the old woman is the serpent. This is her title, an honour for the wisdom she carries. She has the wisdom of the serpent, whose ancestors lived in these cliffs when men had not yet evolved into bipeds. It takes time and maturity to understand the code: "May God give you long life, my son!"

THE FRENCH fable-writer La Fontaine used the same literary conceit. His fox and cat show cunning, the raven illustrates stupidity or cupidity. In Africa hyenas are stupid and mean, while the rabbit (actually a hare) shows cunning and wit. Brer Rabbit, hero of American folklore and grandfather of filmstar Roger Rabbit, was African. He came to America with the slave ships. The African hare took over humour just as African singing took over the churches and jazz came to define American music.

Souley told me another African story which illustrates how wisdom and initiation come only with age. In an African jungle, the baby monkey asked his mother: "Mother, why do you have such big red buttocks?" To which his mother replied "May God give you long life, my son!"

A Country Diary

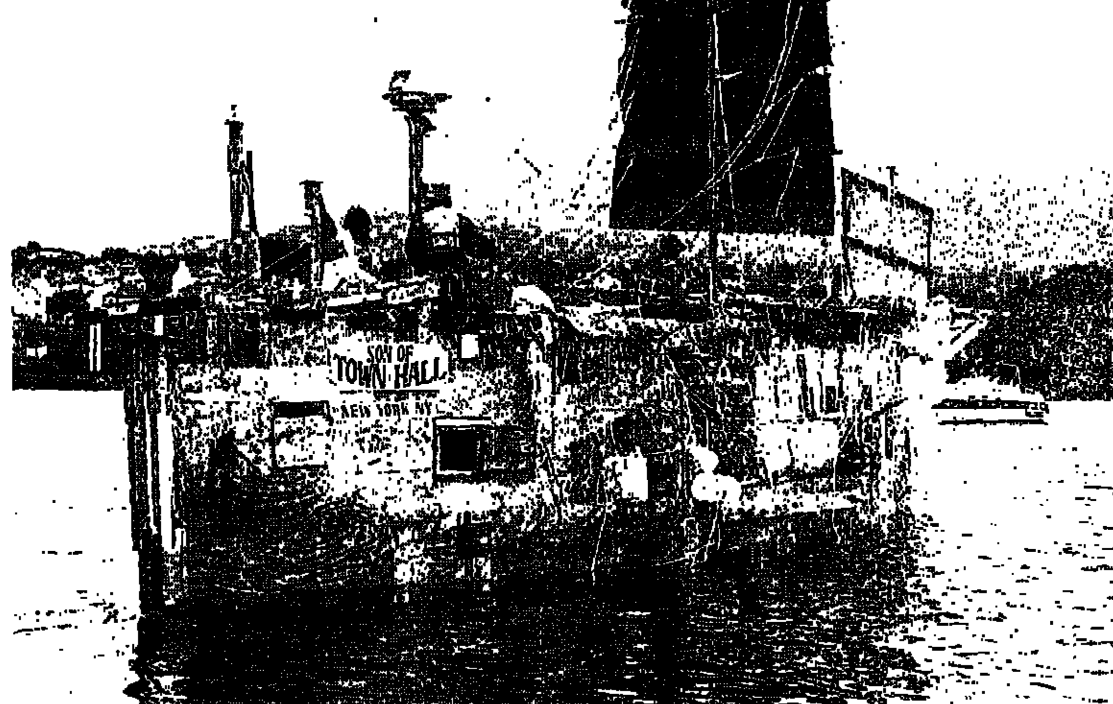
Jacqueline Karp Gendre

GIRONDE: When I saw a lone bat fluttering above the garden shed at six o'clock on a very hot summer's evening, I knew something unusual was afoot. By eight, when walking on the coastal path along the Gironde, I had found the answer. Flying ants. Millions of them. Driving at our faces, catching in our hair.

Homing in on them and narrowly avoiding us were dozens of swifts, dark, silent and sinister, curving and swerving, zooming and consuming in flight like fighter planes.

The ants had even enticed a flurry of redstarts down to the beach where they hopped from rock to rock in search of tasty morsels, their orange-red tails fanning out in the dimming evening light. The swifts and redstarts disappeared with the dark and I waded into the bay for a night time swim. The tide was on its way out and a pair of herons were returning from the Médoc after a busy day's fishing, heading for their heronry on the old salt flats, gliding high and majestically across the estuary.

A herring gull sat on a yellow buoy way out in the bay — no doubt avoiding all the tourists — and a laughing gull with chocolate-brown face hovered for an instant above my head, then sailed leisurely on. Sea bream, short of oxygen at the end of such a hot day, popped their noses out and sent widening ripples over the cool sea, grey now and as flat as a millpond.



Son of Town Hall sails into Castletownbere, Co Cork, after its Atlantic crossing PHOTO PROVISION

Braving life on an ocean wave

Rory Carroll

FOUR artists too poor to fly but keen to see the world have crossed the Atlantic with three dogs aboard a boat made of recycled plywood and barrels. Landing on Ireland's west coast last week, their skipper said they were only slightly insane.

Villagers at Castletownbere, Co Cork, were not so sure. They described the 15m vessel as a garden shed, a doll's house, a rubbish tip and a lunatic asylum.

Since leaving Halifax, Nova Scotia, 63 days earlier the craft had dodged icebergs, storms and 8m waves. Edward Garry, aged 37, said the sail and engine-powered craft, named Son of Town Hall, was built entirely from scrap metal and discarded wood.

"It is a composite of recycled materials, and we have put it together to make our dreams come true. We set out for France, but when we saw Ireland in our vision, we decided to go for it. We are all a little crazy in our own way — I just demonstrate it a little more pointedly."

The crew consisted of a married couple in their 60s from San Francisco, a Canadian, Roger Doncaster, and Mr Garry, an Irish-American. The dogs are two Rottweilers, Siegfried and Thor, and a Mexican poodle called Willie. Humans and dogs lived on pasta and tinned food.

Poppino Neutrino, aged 65, said he and his wife, Aurelia, aged 63, will use the two weeks to promote recycling and prepare for their next voyage, to the Mediterranean.

Mr Doncaster said: "The idea is to show people that you can take the stuff you have around you and recycle it and make use of it."

Declan Gegan, a coastguard, said they had been blessed with calm weather. "This kind of thing is dangerous, and stretches the resources of coastguards and rescue services."

Mr Garry said: "The raft could not sink — only break up. I never had a doubt that we would make it."

An Irish naval ship, the LE Eimear, resupplied the boat when it entered Irish waters on Tuesday last week. Stocks were low because the crew had expected the 3,000-mile journey to last 30 days, not 63.

Another vessel, the LE Ciara, escorted them into Castletownbere, where Customs officials refused to allow them to disembark until the raft had been searched.

Bill Jones, Castletownbere's harbour master, said the boat was seaworthy. "It's hardly describable. It looks like something out of the Beverly Hillbillies, but underneath it's well built."

One spectator was less impressed. "It looks like two sails on top of a garden shed." Safety equipment amounted to a VHF radio, two mega-band transceivers and flares.

A police spokeswoman in Halifax, Nova Scotia, was amazed at the news. "They made it? I don't believe it."

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

IF A 750cc racing motorbike was pitted against a Formula One racing car, which would win?

A 750CC racing motorbike would stand no chance of beating a Formula One car. The F1 car is simply too fast, especially around high speed corners, where the huge downforce generated by the aerodynamics of an F1 car allow 3-4G to be experienced during cornering.

Also, the car does not suffer from the problem of keeping its front wheel on the ground under hard acceleration. (Incidentally, the fastest racing bikes are usually the 500cc Grand Prix bikes — not the 750s which are normally 4-stroke machines!) — *Jeff Newman, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire*

IS IT really possible to break a wine glass by singing at a particular pitch and volume?

YES. The note sung has to be at or near the resonance frequency of the glass, and must be loud enough to cause enough vibrations large enough to shatter the glass.

The wine glass will have to be almost perfectly circular in cross section in order that its resonance frequency be in the vocal range. Occasionally you will see water in the bottom of the glass modify its resonance frequency. In addition, such experiments will often use crystal, ostensibly because no prima donna could be expected to shatter an ordinary glass, but more correctly because crystal, being more brittle, is easier to shatter. — *Andy Harbison, Dublin*

I DON'T know about wine glasses and singing, but years ago our infant daughter was screaming on her mother's knee when a glass on the nearby table disintegrated. — *Peter Parker, Ely, Cambridgeshire*

FOR minimal environmental damage, should I dry my hands using the roller towel, a paper towel, or the hot air drier?

ACCORDING to the late Carl Sagan's book Billions And Billions, one excellent way to counter the build-up of excess carbon dioxide in our atmosphere is to grow lots of trees, cut them down and bury them. Therefore, the most environmentally sensitive towel is new, unrecycled paper, buried in an urban landfill after use. — *Joseph Holmes, Vacaville, California*

Any answers?

WHAT was the longest single construction project successfully carried through? — *Michael Dolbear, Walton on Thames*

WHAT is the origin of the phrase "over a barrel" — is it rude? — *Michael Wear, London*

IS THERE any scientific basis for regarding some colours as harmonising with each other and some as clashing? — *David Bradnack, Haddenham, Buckinghamshire*

WHO sent the first e-mail? When? What did it say? — *Rev Gordon Oliver, Cascais, Portugal*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

A toast to melancholia

JAZZ CD OF THE WEEK
Ronald Atkins

THE shibboleths that distinguish the packaging of jazz nowadays include a splattering of all-star guests and some kind of peg. Built around tunes linked to a much-admired and widely influential pianist, this CD might be said to fit the bill.

Such albums are rarely classics, since the juggling of personnel from track to track is often caused less by musical exigencies than by terms of contract. But I Remember Bill, a tribute to Bill Evans, is far better than most.

Hardly a household name but respected within the business, Don Sebesky played trombone with Stan Kenton in the sixties before opting for the arranger's role. Here, he fills the spaces with strings, woodwind or brass, sometimes adapting part of an Evans solo for the ensemble, as on So What and Piece Peace.

Among a large and well-contrasted cast of luminaries are the pianist's rhythm sections from different stages of his career — Eddie Gomez with Marty Morell, and Marc Johnson with Joe LaBarbera. Joe Lovano and Tom Harrell always make welcome guests, as does Lee Konitz, whose pungent, off-centre phrasing and vinegary sound on alto saxophone grip especially when applied, as here, to tunes everybody knows.




Bill Evans: He preferred to let the music speak for itself

Part of Evans's appeal to audiences came from the way he externalised melancholia, a mood evoked by the reedy echoing of Eddie Daniels's clarinet and wry, conflated tones from the harmonica of Toots Thielemans.

The latest vocal adaptation of Blue In Green, sung by Jeannie Bryson, incorporates cleverly the original solos of Miles Davis and John Coltrane. Interesting to see if the ever-modulating title tune, written by Sebesky and sung by John Pizzarelli, survives as long as Benny Golson's memorial to Clifford Brown.

The final bonus is a brief recorded interview with Evans, who in general preferred to let the music speak for itself.

To order I Remember Bill (RCA Victor) for £13.99 contact CultureShop (see page 29). Free p&p in UK; 10% in Europe; 15% in the rest of the world

Ian Dury, the master of lubricious seriousness, at Paul Weller's annual London gig PHOTO: EAMONN McCABE

Oi, I'm not dead yet

POP CONCERT
Caroline Sullivan

PAUL Weller's annual London outdoor gig has become a way for fans to measure their progress against Weller's. So far, his progress has been identical to that of most baby-boomers: a wildish youth (The Jam years) followed by a more acquisitive late 20s (the Style Council period) and a mellowed-out, thirties (his solo career). But now he's 40, and, faced with such ineluctable proof of their own middle age, some fans seemed more thoughtful than usual as they watched him go through his paces.

At least Weller doesn't act 40, or look it. He's still skinny and as concerned with clothes as any Modfather (we'll overlook the pudding-bowl haircut, which would have rendered even a 20-year-old unfanciable as it flapped around his face like a spaniel's ears). But he's at the age where he's entitled to spaniel's ears if he wants, just as he's entitled to dictate who appears with him. If he demands the services of skilled-but-dull soulstress Carleen Anderson or Finley Quaye, it's up to him.

His most interesting bit of casting was Ian Dury & The Blockheads. After a string of improbably huge hits in the seventies, such as the immortal Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick, Dury and his Blockheads went their own ways for the next 17 years. They recently regrouped and released an album, Mr Love Pants, which shows them to have retained every ounce of their lubricious seediness. But their inclusion on the bill is more to do with the fact that Dury has cancer. He was forced to cancel a recent show, and if he is unable to play again, this gig will stand as a fitting finale, particularly as Victoria Park was also the site of one of his first major shows, a 1977 Rock Against Racism rally.

Despite the fierce sun, Dury was bundled up in a jacket and scarf, his only concession to the weather being sunglasses straight from a Clacton novelty shop. His voice was uncharacteristically faint as he enquired, "How ya goin', Cambridge?" I don't know about Cambridge, but Victoria Park was goin' fine, and cheered very loudly. Then he rasped a horrid, dirty-old-man laugh that assured us he hadn't lost his marbles, and the Blockheads ploughed into What A Waste.

Dury gained strength as that song's choppy, anomalous punk chords (anomalous because the Blockheads are a lounge-jazz outfit who incorporated a tiny helping of punk 20 years ago when the times demanded it) swirled into the music-hall sauciness of Billericay Dickie. Describing the amorous escapades of said Essex boy, Dickie seemed to infuse Dury with energy. He fairly shouted the last words: "I'm not a flaming thickie, I'm Billericay Dickie, and I'm doing VERY WELL!" He defied you to disagree.

The Blockheads, an ill-matched assortment of pub denizens in shorts, shades and badly-bleached hair, played as if it had been 17 days rather than years since they last backed Dury. Theirs must be one of the oddest jobs in pop — producing slinky cocktail melodies as a foil to a stubby little character muttering hoarse Cockney imprecations. But they were nothing less than majestic, Davey Payne's swooning saxophone transforming Dury's absurd lyrics (why ARE nanny goats a reason to be cheerful?) into gleaming surrealism. When it was over and the applause had died down, Dury seemed suddenly spent and was tenderly helped from the stage by an assistant.

He would have been a hard act to follow even for an artist more focused than Finley Quaye. How does this pop-reggae starlet get away with aimless sets that lack any continuity? He didn't finish so much as just sort of drift to a halt; ambling offstage like he was popping out for a minute, never to return.

A short, swarthy figure introduced Weller: "Ladies and gentlemen, for what you are about to receive may you be truly grateful." If you say so, Noel Gallagher. There'd be more of him later.

The good points of the Weller live experience are that he is a passionate vocalist who sings even battered old faves like Sunflower as if it was the first time and that he can play keyboards as deftly as he plays guitar the rest of the time. The less good points are the wholegrain guitar-centric music, which well deserves the term it spawned, dad-rock: and Weller's relentless seriousness, enabling him to sing the line "I've got a heavy soul" without looking at all abashed.

Leave it to our friend from Oasis to save the day during an encore of Dr John's Walk On Gilded Splinters: Gallagher is becoming more and more like the old-school rockers he once despised, cavorting and throwing shapes as he shared a mike with Weller. The latter was a picture of dignity by contrast as Gallagher made faces and finally ran away. Comic relief! Paul Weller does have a sense of humour after all.

Bodice ripper with substance

CINEMA
Richard Williams

FOR anyone out there struggling to re-establish contact with the first principles of feminism, an evening with Firelight might not be entirely wasted. Beneath the handsome costumes, romantic gestures and stately convolutions of this entirely predictable period melodrama, there beats the staunch heart of a feminist parable.

In a draughty mansion on the Sussex Downs one winter's day in the 1840s, a young Swiss governess (Sophie Marceau) is trying to teach her charge, a bright and beautiful but chillingly intractable seven-year-old English girl (Dominique Belcourt), to read, using a set of hand-painted picture cards. The girl isn't having any of it. In fact she's indulging in her favourite sport of getting the governess the sack.

If that's your game, the governess responds, here is what ignorance will bring you: a kind of disenfranchisement, the forfeiture of control over your own life, putting you at the mercy of those who will shape and order it for you. "A life of loneliness and humiliation," Elisabeth warns, meaning the near-inevitability of a loveless, powerless marriage. "That's why I want you to learn to read."

Written and directed by William Nicholson, whose play Shadowlands was filmed by Richard Attenborough five years ago, Firelight has all the accoutrements of the well-made English costume drama. The excellence of its design and decor can be taken for granted, along with the basic literacy of the screenplay. Equally unsurprising, in its portrayal of the conflict between duty and desire, is the deft manipulation of repressed but nevertheless turbulent emotions. But for all the familiarity of its ideas and devices, the film treats its central theme — the necessity of taking charge of one's own destiny — with conviction.

When we first meet Elisabeth, the governess, she is trying to pay off her father's debts by hiring herself out as a brood mare to an Englishman, Charles Godwin (Stephen Dillane), who desires an heir but whose wife, an accident victim, is paralysed in body and mind. Elisabeth will spend three nights in a French hotel with Godwin, give birth to their child, and then disappear with her fee, bound by a vow of silence. Godwin and the child will return to his household, which is run by his wife's sister (Lia Williams), a loyal and adoring surrogate.

The nights in the hotel turn out to be unexpectedly tender, but events otherwise take place as ordered. Afterwards, however, Elisabeth finds herself yearning for her daughter, to the point where she is eventually unable to resist the urge to break the bargain and re-enter the family's world, getting herself hired by the sister-in-law as the girl's governess.

When Godwin himself sees and recognises his daughter's natural mother, he is horrified and immediately gives her notice to quit. The child, responsive only to her father's uncritical love, is equally keen to see the back of her. But as she works out her notice Elisabeth begins to break down Louisa's resistance, drawing her towards an engagement with the world.

She also demonstrates to Godwin the danger of allowing his daughter to grow up in isolation, marooned in a cold and underpopulated house, whose bedridden mistress is a constant presence. The ambiguous relationship between the warm governess/mother and the tight-wound girl/daughter is carefully controlled by Marceau, who is perfectly at ease with the English dialogue as Elisabeth battles with the suppression of her own feelings.

Dillane, in his first screen role since Welcome To Sarajevo, matches Marceau by carefully underplaying his own torment, leading the character gradually towards the awful decision that will resolve their dilemma. Lia Williams gives a poignant resonance to the hopes of the plain, resolute sister-in-law. Joss Ackland is amusing as Godwin's feckless father, frittering away a fortune on importing musicians from Paris to play the new-fangled polka at his soirées.

It would be simple and smart to poke fun at Firelight, at its many clichés and occasional inconsistencies, and particularly at those elements of character and plot that bring it uncomfortably close to the world of Barbara Cartland. None of it matters much. You either scorn this kind of lush escapism or you succumb to it. But if this is your kind of thing, watch out. Breasts heave and swell so much that when it's over even the audience may require the expert attention of Mlle Marceau's corset-maker.

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Cutting up a bit of rough

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

LAST week in **Brookside** (Channel 4) Lindsey Corkhill went to Finnegan's Health Club. If you want someone's health to take a turn for the worse, have a word with a Finnegan. Our Linds said bluntly she wanted her husband, Gary, dead. Even Mrs Finnegan, a sharp-featured woman with ample eye-liner, was taken aback by this. "We're not into just killing someone at the drop of a hat." "I'll do it then! Get me a gun or sumpin 'cos I am going to kill him!" cried Our Linds, who could go on as Lady Macbeth without rehearsal.

Mrs Finnegan talked to her like a Dutch Uncle. If Lady Macbeth had had a Dutch Uncle, it would have saved a great deal of unnecessary poetry. She said murder was messy. She mentioned blood and bits of brain and forensic evidence.

"That's if they find the body," said Our Linds shrewdly. She lives in Brookside Close, where they bury bodies under the patio.

"So what are you gonna do?" asked Mrs Finnegan. "Chop it into pieces? Chuck it into the Mersey? Burn it? You haven't got a clue what to do!" Wrapped in white towelling robes, they discussed the difficulty of dismantling a body. Mrs Finnegan was now in full flood. "Do you know the weight of a man's arm once you've chopped it off? Then there's the other arm. The leg. The torso. The head. This is serious stuff, Lindsey! And then you'll need something to put the body in. How many bin bags do you think you'll need? They're not very strong are they?" "It's What I Want," said Our Linds, grinding a tooth or two.

I freely admit that I hadn't realised the importance of a good quality bin bag in a successful murder. If there is one thing you can proudly claim for soaps, it is their educational value. Few who saw Meg Mortimer teaching Amy Turtle about decimalisation will forget the experience. Time and soaps roll on. Now it's how to calculate the weight of your husband's leg.

I was tremendously taken with opera critics, the wrecking crew in **Critical Condition** (Channel 4). They slink about like mink in the dark. They have very sharp tongues, very long memories and are riven to the bone with bitter internecine feuds. The endearingly rumpled Martin Hoyle (Time Out) guided us through this darkling landscape and introduced us, when possible, to the other opera critics. It was like a badger watch.

Rodney Milnes (The Times) hid behind Doric columns but Tom Sutcliffe (Evening Standard) gave a polished interview. "I can't imagine Tom Sutcliffe passing up a chance to be in a film with a lot of hair-tossing," said Hoyle, ungratefully. Thereafter your horrified eye was irresistibly drawn to the tossing forelock. If there isn't an opera around, they do seem to practise on each other.

Hugh Canning (Sunday Times) and David Fingleton (Express) have not spoken since Canning called Fingleton an arsehole seven years ago. Canning would not speak to the programme at all, allegedly because they were spending too much time with insignificant critics. (Thought to be a reference to Hoyle M. and Fingleton D.) Milnes, who melted fluidly into the night when spotted, explained that he liked to mull over a performance undistracted. It was, therefore, a joy to see him cornered in the interval by the extrovert Sutcliffe, who spoke vibrantly about the power of the production ("Balls out, as you might say"). Murmuring that he never discussed a performance in the interval, Milnes vanished with an anguished air. "Some people are sensitive souls," said Sutcliffe, astonished.

It was Milnes, gazing mildly over half-moon spectacles, who unexpectedly described critics as "rather like sex toys. They may add spice to what one hopes is an already pleasurable experience."

Danton's Death, Buchner's epic of the French Revolution, directed by Robert Wilson PHOTO: DAVID BALTZER

All good things come to an end

SALZBURG FESTIVAL
Michael Billington

SHOULD festivals have themes? Too much packaging looks rigid; too little gives the impression of a glorious rag-bag. But at this year's Salzburg Festival, Gérard Mortier and his drama director, Ivan Nagel, have solved the problem brilliantly by exploring the idea of failed Utopias.

One of Mortier's many innovations since 1992 has been to import avant-garde directors: this year, for instance, Lepage, Sellars and Marthaler. But, at first sight, the pairing of Robert Wilson with Büchner's 1835 epic, **Danton's Death**, seems a little strange. The peripatetic Texan uses light, sound and images to create works of formal beauty; Büchner's ground-breaking masterpiece, set during the French Revolutionary Terror of 1794, deals both with Danton's disillusion and the idea, developed by Marx, that man is the victim of historical forces. Yet the pairing of Wilson and Büchner sheds extraordinary light on the play.

Wilson's crucial insight is that Danton and Robespierre are two sides of the same coin. Both are haunted by the failure of the revolutionary dream, both are aware of impending death, both are alert to the danger of chaos, but both are as much victims of destiny as its agents.

Wilson reinforces the point by casting Martin Wuttke to play Danton, not as the usual shaggy demagogue, but as a man tormented by memories. What is extraordinary is his physical similarity to Sylvester Groth's Robespierre. Both are small, dark, faintly vampirical figures in russet silks.

Something of the play's rude vitality gets overlaid by Wilson's aestheticism, but he comes up with a series of spellbinding tableaux: Danton hovering sinisterly over his mistress, Marion; Danton's wife, Julie, seen taking poison against a horizontal strip of white light; the final deaths, with the protagonists disappearing inside a white cabinet. Wilson choreographs the play as much as directs it, but he offers a powerful image of the French Revolution as a nightmarish dance of death.

The idea of an initially idealistic Utopian movement ending in a bloodbath recurs in Hal Hartley's strange musical play Soon. Hartley, best known as an independent film-maker, chooses religion as the theme of his first stage piece, inspired by the events at Waco, Texas, in 1993 when 74 of David Koresh's followers and four FBI agents died.

Hartley does not moralise about the event. Instead, with the help of seven actors, he builds up a picture of the chasm of understanding between self-enclosed religious orders and the outside world. But while Hartley records their superstition and hypocrisy — "I'm taking on the responsibility of sex," declares their leader, "so the rest of you can be free" — he also shows how American society and the media resent their self-sufficiency. What emerges is a tragedy of incomprehension.

As an idea, it is powerful. But the movement is heavily stylised and every line is spoken into portable microphones. The effect is somewhat stultifying. Movies, I suspect, are his natural métier.

I got much more of a kick out of Peter Zadek's sumptuous production of **The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny**. For a start, there is a rich irony in hearing a Salzburg audience told: "Having no money is the greatest crime on earth." But Zadek and his designer, Richard Peduzzi, also get the crucial point that if you are going to attack the heedless consumerism of this mythical city, you have to convey all its ripe decadence. Here it is presented as a Hollywood Babylon full of pyramidal towers, carved elephants, commodified sex and licensed gluttony.

THE richness of Weill's score is also brought out under Dennis Russell Davies's baton, and there are beautifully sung performances from Jerry Hadley as the lumberjack Jimmy, executed for poverty, and from Catherine Malfitano as the heartless tart Jenny.

But even if Salzburg this year offers a cohesive portrait of failed Utopias, hope is not dead. I was much moved by Palestinian theatre director François Abou Salem's treatment of Mozart's Die Entführung, not as a period Turkish romp, but as a modern hostage-drama in which the captor, Bassa Selim, at the end not only releases his prisoners but sheds his Westernised dress and rediscovers his Muslim identity. As the captives were liberated and he himself whirled away into the sand-strewn distance, you suddenly felt that Utopia was a possibility after all.

Anatomical video tour of duo's innermost secrets

Adrian Searle on the good, bad and brilliant art at the Edinburgh festival

THE visual arts at the Edinburgh festival, which begins this week, often feel like little more than hangover relief. Why, one asks every year, is the Royal Scottish Academy so boring? And why does the National Gallery of Scotland engage in so much window dressing and so little substance? Both institutions seem to sleepwalk through the festival without any idea of artistic relevance — as if they regard themselves as resting places for the heritage-trail audience the morning after the Tattoo before.

The Academy is holding a retrospective of the Scottish post-Impressionist and colourist William Gillies. Gillies may have been a major figure in the pantheon of 20th century Scottish artists, but he was a minor painter by European standards, a local hero at best. The National Gallery's Effigies And Ecstasies: Roman Baroque Sculpture In The Age Of Bernini is just a disappointment. This is a historical footnote, drawn entirely from British collections, rather than the Baroque-busting extravaganza we hoped for.

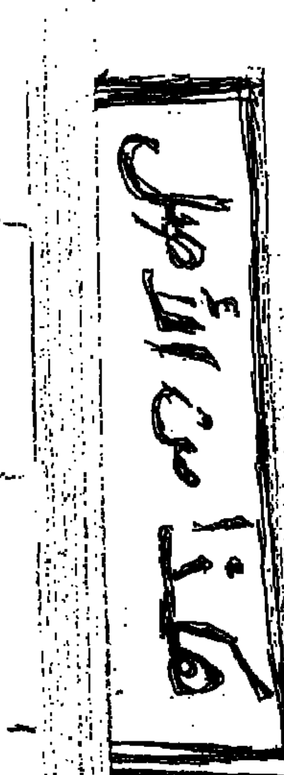
But elsewhere this year's festival exhibitions are rather better than usual. It is a truism that the distinctions between the visual arts and other media are breaking down, and that shift is reflected. In a major show at the Fruitmarket Gallery, Stephanie Smith and Edward Stewart play out peculiar routines which you're well advised not to try at home. A few lines from Samuel Beckett's Company provide the leitmotif of "Hooded. Bared", a sequence of video installations in which the artists act out games of control and mutual trust. The artists torment one another with kisses and snarls, almost asphyxiate themselves with their heads buried in miked-up pillows, and show us what it would look like if we could see down their nostrils.

Three of the works here are videos recorded from inside the artists' mouths. In a small monitor piece, Part, the camera in the mouth shows the tongue thrashing around, trying to speak, the oesophagus gagging and retching involuntarily on the camera, the mouth wallowing in saliva. In Vent and Inside Out, the mouth becomes an enormous dark cavern. You feel like a very small being, trapped in the darkest recesses of your own, or someone else's, head. This is horrible. Where can Smith/Stewart go with this, I ask myself? And what do they get up to on a quiet evening in? Smith/Stewart's latest work is theatre of a most extreme sort.

One makes an inevitable comparison with Mona Hatoum's endoscopic camera journey into her own orifices, Corpse Etranger, showing at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art. Where Smith/Stewart's work wins out, however, is in the directness of their approach. The formal complexities of Hatoum's work, whatever the subject matter, end up looking a bit fussy and overdetermined.

But let's not undervalue form. The real revelation of this year's festival is a small exhibition of works by the 74-year-old Czech artist Stanislav Kolíbal at Edinburgh School of Art. Kolíbal's work comes out of Constructivism, Cubism and Brancusi, and his subsequent development as an artist has paralleled minimalism, post-minimalism and *arte povera*. Kolíbal has worked under extremely difficult conditions, even being banned for exhibiting publicly for 15 years in the aftermath of the Prague Spring. His delicate, battered works, constructions of white-painted board, lumber, plaster and thread, inhabit the space between the diagram and the object, between painting and sculpture. Kolíbal is a great stylist, but his best work is intensely poetic. The act of making, in Kolíbal's work, is a small act of resistance.

This exhibition, a partial retrospective of work since the 1960s, has been beautifully, casually installed by the artist in a couple of grubby white studio spaces. Completion and destruction co-exists at the same place and at the same moment in these works. How Easy It Is To Break Something (1972) is an off-white, scribbled-on board that hangs from the wall. On either side of a slender drawn rectangle are holes bored for the thumbs and fingers. A stick, the same shape and length as the drawn rectangle, dangles broken from the bottom of the work. It sounds like nothing much but it has a terrific poignancy and humour. It is a work caught between the intention and the act. It is a thing in itself, and a memory of a kind of performance.



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God, is that the time?

Amanda Foreman

The Calendar: The 5,000-Year Struggle to Align the Clock and the Heavens – and What Happened to the Missing 10 Days
by David Ewing Duncan
Fourth Estate 360pp £12.99

TIME is money, and money equals power. These were truisms long before Marx and Engels identified the factory klaxon as an instrument of tyranny. The history of the calendar is more than just a mathematician's curiosity, it is a description of one of the most fundamental aspects of humanity: its quest for truth and order.

The Calendar by David Ewing Duncan is about the conflict between nature and science. It belongs to that fashionable genre of the pocket-knowledge book. Popularised by Longitude, these books are cheap, short, and centred on slightly off-beat subjects. The genre is rapidly sinking to being the fast food of the knowledge industry. But at their best, they are like finely crafted miniatures, entrancing to behold and valued for their own worth.

The Calendar sparkles as one of the very best of its kind. Gripping, expansive and scholarly, it will be indispensable reading for years to come.

Stonehenge may have been built as a calendar, an observatory, or a Bronze Age assembly place, but whatever its purpose, it remains a symbol of the immutability of time. For 2,000 years the stones have aligned with the sun at solstice and at equinox. However, despite the tomfoolery of modern-day ersatz Druids, Stonehenge is not the answer to man's relationship to God, or the gods, or the stars, nor is it the key to a higher, unexplained order of things. Likewise, the modern calendar is best understood as a description of time and nothing more. Immutability does not, in itself, provide meaning.

For that reason, the ancients all attached quite different meanings to the calendar. To the Egyptians it represented the mysteries of the gods. Only the priests and certain members of the aristocracy knew how to work its computations. So rigorously did the Egyptian élite guard their calendar that they refused to make any alterations even though they knew it was imperfect. To the Greeks, it represented the beauty of mathematics. To the Romans it represented the empire's dominion over the lives of its subjects. It ordered their days and determined the rhythm of their lives.

But it was not until 45BC, when Julius Caesar imposed the 365-day Julian calendar, that individuals were able to experience a sense of order and regularity independent of the moon, the seasons or the gods.

Unfortunately, the Julian calendar's carefully calibrated order only lasted one generation. Augustus not only changed the name of the months, but also added an extra day to August, thereby robbing February of a day. There was also the added complication that the calendar was 11 minutes slower than the true solar year. By 1250, when the heretic Roger Bacon made his calculations, the Julian calendar had picked up an extra nine days. By then, time had become a battleground between science and religion, and for 300 years the Church ruthlessly hounded out the truth-seekers in the belief than any change to the calendar would weaken its claim to infallibility.

It was not until the rise of humanism that a more enlightened Pope, Gregory XIII, determined that the now 10-day drift had to be corrected, but many held fast to the Julian calendar for another 118 years: Britain did not follow suit until 1752. One by one, non-Catholic countries have accepted the Gregorian calendar as their own. Japan took it up in 1873, Russia in 1917, and finally China in 1949. There is now just one standard of time, Atomic Time, based on the oscillations of atomic caesium, and one calendar based on the solar year. Yet, strictly speaking, it is still not a true measurement of the year. Ironically, civilisation's ability to measure time has become too accurate to measure the tiny random fluctuations within the Earth's rotations. The 5,000-year struggle to invent the perfect clock has created too perfect a timepiece for nature. Truth and order remain maddeningly elusive.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £10 contact CultureShop (see page 29)

A little bit of nicey nicey

Natasha Walter

An Illustrated Anthology of Erotica
edited by Charlotte Hill and William Wallace
Little, Brown 3 vols £25

TOWARDS the end of the second volume of this three-volume anthology of erotica you find a troubling review of an erotic book. Restif de la Bretonne, an 18th century writer, is lying in bed reading a juicy volume that a friend has lent him. "After a score of pages, I was on fire," he tells us. One after another, women who visit him bear the brunt of his desire. He rapes his laundry girl ("She did not put up much resistance"), a friend of his sister's with "so much fury . . . she thought I had gone mad," his landlady, and then two more visitors, Seraphine and Agathe. "Such is the effect of erotic literature," Bretonne tells us smugly.

Does Bretonne have a point? The purpose of erotica that is written as erotica — as opposed to books that contain passages of sex — must be purely to inflame desire. And since erotica glosses over the problems of sex — in erotica there can be no resistance, no aftermath, no gap between desire and action — maybe it can be blamed for causing a crazy irresponsibility. But one nice thing about this anthology is that only a small proportion of these texts and pictures even touch on violence. Most of them belong in a charmed world where sex is always mutually orgasmic. The women who take part in the sex games of John Cleland or Anaïs Nin — always found in this sort of anthology — are almost always "wild with excitement and delight", greeting sex with "the warmest confluence", and "cross-currents of increasing pleasure".

In a way the very idea of erotica, as a genre, feels outdated. Now that writers can use once-forbidden words without any fear of prosecution, collections like these look a bit like collections of pressed flowers. The erotic staples — the excitable virgins and eager aristocrats — are part of another era, and the language is often hilariously dated: "Oh Jim, you shall stroke me now! You shall violate me again. Won't it be nicey nicey?" runs one risible passage here. And yet once you begin to turn the pages some of the flowers unfold again. For erotica to work, the characters and situations must be purely sexual but they must not be merely generic. It's easy to mock writers like Anaïs Nin, John Cleland, Frank Harris, Pauline Réage, because they all serve a common goal — the communication of longing, the touch of flesh on flesh. But the best of them remember to create their own dreams, in their own individual and sometimes hypnotic language, thickened with their own obsessions.

Although the very word erotica smacks of stockings and corsets and maids, it seems to be as fashionable as ever. Shelves of erotic imprints line the bookstores, and the circulation of the Erotic Review has risen from 4,000 to 25,000 in the past six months.

These editors have worked hard to try to make sure that there are few thorns in this rose garden. "The Marquis de Sade and other lesser prophets of cruelty and violence have been left to sweat in their own nightmares," they tell us stoutly at the outset. But despite their progressive inclinations, they admit that they had a hard time collecting women's fantasies. "This is unavoidable," they say. But there are now dozens of women writers at work who revel in the patterns of erotica, from the work of a feminist novelist such as Maureen Freely, to a researcher such as Nancy Friday, or even the erstwhile games of Madonna in Sex. The relative absence of women's voices gives this book the lop-sided, limping feel of almost all erotic anthologies.

Erotic pictures are placed next to erotic texts, a neat idea that bulks out the necessarily repetitive nature of the genre. To find a sensual 11th century Indian stone relief next to an extract from the Kama Sutra, or a louche 18th century watercolour next to a passage from Fanny Hill, emphasises the sensual impact of the words, and the warmth and weight of the flesh that is its subject.

These books range through such an infinite field of artistic merit — from D H Lawrence or William Blake, to anonymous Victorian magazine fodder; or from Picasso and Rodin to 19th century postcards — that you can feel dizzy and overloaded. This is mood music, and depending on your state of mind when you open these books, you'll find them wicked, cute, inflammatory or tame. Bretonne tried to blame his book, but we know where the blame really lies.




Radclyffe Hall: a man 'cursed with a woman's body' PHOTO: CORBIS

Inverted dogmas

Stephanie Merritt

The Trials of Radclyffe Hall
by Diana Souhami
Weidenfeld & Nicolson 356pp £20

"*SHE* kissed her full on the lips like a lover." This is the most sexually provocative single sentence in The Well Of Loneliness, Radclyffe Hall's bestselling and notorious "lesbian" novel. However, the book's publication in 1928 resulted in a trial which not only involved some of the most eminent political and literary figures in England but also accorded the novel a place in the century's literary history that it hardly merited.

The events of the trial, in which the Home Office successfully sought to ban the novel under the Obscene Publications Act, form the core of Diana Souhami's witty and fascinating new biography. A week before her book went to press, Souhami was granted access to previously unreleased government papers, thus confirming her theory of a misogynistic conspiracy perpetrated by a male oligarchy: the Home Secretary, Lord Chancellor, Chief Magistrate and Director of Public Prosecutions were all, apparently, in clandestine correspondence about the case. Gross male prejudice and moral bigotry were unquestionably at work, but what is ironic, as Souhami shows, is that Radclyffe Hall should have become such an anti-establishment figure for later generations of lesbians.

For the majority of her supporters, the trial raised the matter of literary censorship more than gay rights — a concept yet to be invented — and, in almost every other aspect of her life, Hall was as reactionary as most Edwardian men of her class. (She went on to become a fervent supporter of Mussolini.)

Born in 1880 to a "violent and brainless" mother and philandering father, who separated shortly after her birth, Marguerite Radclyffe Hall suffered an isolated and miserable childhood. Constantly uprooted, physically bullied by her mother and sexually molested by her "disgusting old step-father", she quickly acquired a revulsion towards men.

When she was 18, her errant father died, leaving her his entire estate of £100,000, an exceptional amount of money at that time. With the unexpected independence this gave her, Radclyffe Hall began to travel and to engage in various lesbian affairs.

In 1906, she met the first great love of her life, Mabel Batten, a former lover of the Prince of Wales. Mabel was 50 and married with a daughter, but she immediately took up residence with Radclyffe Hall, who now called herself "John". In 1915, Mabel was usurped in "John's" affection by her own cousin, Una (later to become Lady Troubridge). Una was to remain Radclyffe Hall's devoted acolyte and self-styled "wife" until the latter's death from cancer in 1943.

The Well Of Loneliness was born, as Radclyffe Hall said, of a desire to "put my pen at the service of some of the most misunderstood people in the world". She never used the word "lesbian", describing herself instead as a "congenital invert"; she felt herself to be a man cursed with a woman's body.

Souhami is understandably indignant about the virulent prejudice surrounding the trial, in which, she argues, the male ruling class dressed up its suppression of female sexuality in the guise of Christian dogma, and in the chapters relating to it, her otherwise measured prose is spiced with glimpses of righteous anger. Yet this is not a eulogising biography by any means. It portrays with affectionate candour Radclyffe's own bigotry, her sexual tyranny, selfishness and double standards (a self-proclaimed animal-lover, she regularly had her pets whipped or put down when they displeased her), and never lets us forget that behind all the posturing lurked an unhappy girl desperate for a mother's affection.

It will probably not inspire you to rush out and buy The Well Of Loneliness, but Souhami's immaculate documentation, her stock of colourful anecdotes and her fluent style make this a far more entertaining account of an invert's trials than anything achieved in the novels of Radclyffe Hall.

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André Brink . . . master of the Afrikaner novel PHOTOGRAPH: ULF ANDERSON

A visit to the subconscious

South Africa's future is a hybrid one. André Brink talks about his latest novel to **John Higgins**

"*THERE* he stopped, and turned his back to the precipice, and . . ." The audience gasped in horror as André Brink completed the sentence from his new novel, Devil's Valley. Genuine horror: Brink's narrative had captivated everyone, no mean feat at a reading to a "heard-it-all-before" audience of sceptical academics at the University of Cape Town, where Brink has been professor of literature since 1991.

In his early 60s, still craggily athletic and attractive, Brink — the author of 15 novels in both Afrikaans and English — is all modesty, charm and intellectual energy. Devil's Valley marks a shift from the predominantly realist mode of his earlier work.

This new phase brings together the sceptical questioning of history associated with postmodernism and a touch of magic realism. Yet Devil's Valley is just as firmly located in a [illegible] landscape that remain [illegible] South African — [illegible] ently imagined — as anything in his work to date.

The seeds of the novel were planted in a journey through the Swartberg Pass in the Little Karoo, an area of semi-arid desert. A mere four or five hours from the lush vineyards of Cape Town, it seems at times as strange and distant as another planet. The pass is startling and sublime, resembling nothing so much as Viking 2's photos of Mars. Brink's response to this environment was immediate: "Ever since I visited the Gamgas Kloof [in the Swartberg mountains], known as The Hell, I just knew there was a novel I had to write. I had the idea of someone coming in. I wasn't quite sure in the beginning who he would be. In fact, it was only after I started writing that he turned out to be a journalist rather than the academic or historian I had first imagined."

Finding the right tone for the narrator — a seedy journalist who leaves the usual routine of his crime reporting in the Western Cape to take back the ashes of a young man he had befriended to the isolated community of Devil's Valley — was Brink's first problem. "Initially, the book's style was much more literary, but there was something that didn't work about it. I must have adding to the curses of the narrator, and trying to capture on paper the speech of some of the crime reporters I had known. They have a very limited vocabulary: there's such a repetitive recourse to the F-word. I wanted to convey something of that without becoming monotonous."

The struggle against his own natural literariness was a useful one. "I am aware of the fact that very often when I write I tend towards a kind of . . ." — he pauses, awkwardly — "of fondling of adjectives. Being kept down to earth by the narrator was a salutary experience. Perhaps I've cleaned up my prose a little."

This sense of imposition is perhaps the key to Brink's creative drive, since good writing, for him, comes precisely from this tension between controlled and unconscious expression. "I want to have the illusion that I know where I'm going when I embark on a book," he says. "I draw up a plan — very roughly — and it gives me a kind of reassurance, but I never stick to it. It gets broken down. I know beforehand that it won't be followed, but I need the feeling of safety that it gives me: at least I have something to fall back on."

It is this process which makes [illegible] "I open myself up to my own subconscious," he says. "That's why I write: to feel in touch with the whole of your self. All kinds of unexpected things keep surfacing all the time. You remember things you never knew you knew." Writing is a dialogue with the self, and with the forces that shape the self, from the closest and most intimate relationships to the deepest social and cultural ones.

Brink's own attitudes towards national and ethnic identity are powered by a mixture of the existentialism which formed him as a student in Paris in the late fifties and early sixties and the post-colonial realities of contemporary South Africa. In his early work he sought to persuade Afrikaners that their dissidence might best be expressed through a "total identification with the African context". At the same time, his writing was always powered by a love for European literature and ideas. Brink has translated many novels into Afrikaans, including his favourite ("I try to re-read it every year"), Don Quixote. This master of the Afrikaner novel was, as he famously put it in an early essay, born on a bench in the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris, in the early spring of the 1960s.

"When I go to the South of France," says Brink, "a part of me thinks, 'I'm home now.' But then, when I fly back over the vast continent of Africa, when I get off the plane and feel the heat and see the clouds of flies, there's something wonderfully homish about that for me. It's incredibly rich to experience these two feelings not as some kind of schizophrenia, which perhaps for a long time I did, but to find that the two can complement each other, and that in the end, you don't want to deny either one of them as a part of yourself."

Culturally exclusive notions of "pure African" identity hold no appeal for him. "I think they're regrettable," he sighs. "One can understand that, at a certain phase of a society's development, or even an individual's private philosophical development, it can be useful and necessary. Black consciousness was important in its time, but I think it would be catastrophic now. In the end, I think hybridity better describes what we are . . . You can't go back to a pre-colonial innocence, which in any case probably never existed."

The Novel (£12.99), a collection of essays by André Brink, is published by Macmillan. Devil's Valley (Secker £15.99) is available for £13 from CultureShop (see below)

Midwife and undertaker to the imagination

Ian Sansom

Roget's Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases
edited by Betty Kirkpatrick
Penguin Books 1,381pp £14.99

THE pages of Roget's Thesaurus, with their distinctive two-column layout, are like great rashers, or slices of rare roast beef — thick, raw and juicy — and as likely as not to produce in the reader a kind of linguistic mad cow disease.

Heralded by its publishers, in what comes close to a parody of the Thesaurian style, as "incomparably inspirational and creative", the new edition of Doctor Roget's book of wordlists remains both a great temptation and a terrible danger to the aspirant writers and students who are liable to dig in and pig out on the contents with scant regard for the often disastrous long-term consequences: the tell-tale swelling of the sentence structures, the flatulence, the indigestion, and eventual death from gorging on word-fat and too much stuffing. Roget's Thesaurus slaps the imagination to make the lungs start working, and then feeds it up on a rich diet of oysters and blue cheese until the heart gives out. It is both midwife and undertaker to the English imagination.

The new edition serves up the modern crustacea of language alongside classic and more familiar dishes. Thus, we get totty with honey, air-kissing with salutation, Le Shuttle with the Orient Express, and Tamagotchi with goldfish, hamsters, guinea pigs and gerbils.

Even though Roget's is often misused and abused by those desperately in search of a style, the book remains one of the English language's greatest achievements. Every language has a dictionary, but not every one needs a thesaurus. Where a dictionary offers definitions, the thesaurus suggests associations; while the dictionary works from word to thing, the thesaurus works in reverse; while a dictionary is a book of bare reason, the thesaurus is a work of conjecture and imagination; dictionaries seize words, and make them static, the thesaurus frees them and makes them mobile; dictionaries are for grammarians, the thesaurus is for [illegible] brilliant of all, the thesaurus contains no history, suggests no tradition, and makes no attempt to clarify, justify or explain its inclusions. It is pure poetry.

For all his book's apparent eccentricities, Doctor Peter Mark Roget clearly knew what he was doing when he first published the thesaurus in 1852. Compiled from a lifetime's notebooks, Roget's Thesaurus was, and remains, a generous work of single authorship.

A thesaurus, according to itself, is like many things — wordlist, dictionary, reference book, collection, treasury — but it remains unique. It represents mankind's constant search for the right words — the story of our lives. It is also a useful reminder that life can be messy, inconvenient, and does not always come in alphabetical order.

Crime

Lucretia Stewart

Night Passage, by Robert B Parker (John Murray, £16.99)

ROBERT B PARKER'S Spenser novels have been sliding downhill for some years, so this terrific non-Spenser book is particularly welcome. Jesse Stone is a broken-down cop who, having been kicked out of the Los Angeles Police Department for drinking, takes a job as police chief in the small Massachusetts town of Paradise. But there's trouble in Paradise and not a small part of it stems from the fact that Stone is not quite the drunken pushover that his new employers expected him to be.

Eye of the Cricket, by James Sallis (No Exit Press, £12)

SALLIS is a strange writer, drawn-out, laid-back, reminiscent of Walter Mosley but more poetic. His New Orleans is a violent, steamy, smouldering place, waiting to erupt; his hero, Lew Griffin, is a private investigator cum writer cum university lecturer who mirrors the city. This is a story about children and the pain they bring you: Lew's lost son, David; Alouette, the missing daughter of Lew's great love, LaVerne; and Danny, loser son of Don, the cop. Sallis walks a narrow line between poetry and pretension. Most of the time he carries it off.

The Bone Yard, by Paul Johnston (Hodder & Stoughton, £16.99)

IMPRESSIVE follow-up to the award-winning Body Politic. The setting is still 21st century Edinburgh, a repressive, supposedly crime-free, independent city state that makes George Orwell's 1984 dystopia look cosy. But subversive private investigator Quintilin Dalrymple has a killer with a taste for the (now banned) blues on his hands. Johnston's conceit with Edinburgh is brilliant and there's a mordant Scots wit to the whole venture, but beneath these very stylish trappings it's the same old serial killer stuff. Crime (in fiction at least), even in the grim future, is much the same as it is now.

Death of A Good Woman, by Max Marquis (Macmillan, £16.99)

THE plot of this mystery is far [illegible] labours like an old car on a steep [illegible] murdered. No one [illegible] spector [illegible] nearly as much sex as the prostitutes) to find out whodunnit. I wonder what place graphic descriptions of Timberlake's sex life have in a detective story, but I guess Marquis thought he had better move with the times.

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Flocking to the rescue

ILLUSTRATION: ANN HORDAY

Mark Cocker

NORTH Ronaldsay is the most northerly of Scotland's Orkney archipelago. Just five kilometres in length and nowhere more than 50 metres above sea level, it's a place lacking in distinctive landmarks. The only strong vertical lines are man-made — those of a 40-metre-tall lighthouse (built by Robert Louis Stevenson's grandfather in the 19th century) and the nearby ruin of its 18th century predecessor.

But if North Ronaldsay has few prominent features it certainly doesn't lack a distinctive atmosphere. Much of this character lies in a sequence of powerful horizontal lines, which begin even below the low-water mark. Beyond the dissolving surf of the incoming tide — the Atlantic Ocean on the west coast and North Sea on the east — one can make out dark submerged belts amongst the water's Mediterranean blue. These are beds of kelp, which probably comprise the tallest vegetation on this treeless island.

Further up the shoreline one encounters a wall elaborately constructed of long slabs of coastal stone, richly mottled with yellow, grey and green lichens, and in some places more than 2m in height. This is known as the sheep "dike" but ... from the air could one truly appreciate its scale. It runs for 20km, entirely encircling the island's beaches — probably the largest single artefact in Orkney. Nobody knows when the millions of blocks of stone were first assembled, but they certainly date back hundreds of years.

The most extraordinary aspect of the dike is that it serves not to keep the animals in, but to keep them out. The North Ronaldsay sheep spend their lives on the shoreline where they feed on the heaps of kelp, known as "tangles", constantly thrown up by the tide.

They are an ancient breed, relics of the first animals domesticated in Britain, with short tails, low shoulders and high haunches, handsome curly horns, a range of fleece colours from black, rich dark brown, through to grey and the softest cream. Their exceptional diet has resulted in a dark mutton with an unusual flavour that now features on the menus of some fashionable restaurants. But in their heyday the sheep were a staple for the islanders themselves and a mainstay of their economy.

The fact that the herds live on an otherwise useless part of the island meant that the interior could be used for crops of oats or for grazing more profitable livestock such as beef cattle. Fattening up on the mountains of tangles tossed ashore by winter storms, the sheep had an added benefit for the islanders of reaching peak condition around Christmas, when other protein sources were in short supply.

Although they run together, each beast is identifiable by cut marks on its ears and each household has its own individual design. At certain times of the year they are caught for marking and shearing in a collective effort known as "pundin". Catching these wary, nimble beasts was always difficult on the treacherous, weed-strewn rocks, but nowadays the *pund* is a major challenge because of the island's dwindling manpower.

Thirty years ago there were 160 residents on North Ronaldsay. Today there are fewer than 80 and this demographic decline will eventually bring in to question the whole future of sheep husbandry on the island. But as yet the 2,000-strong herd represents one of the last vestiges of communal agriculture in Britain, while the sheep themselves are one of the oldest breeds in Europe. And for now the multi-coloured herds roaming the foreshore are as inseparable from the island's identity as the moan of Orkney's eternal wind or the crash of Atlantic surf.

Chess Leonard Barden

THE Smith & Williamson British Championship at Torquay this month stimulated fighting chess as Short and Sadler justified their super-GM status, internationals scrambled for a share of S&W's £23,000 prize money, while ambitious teenagers eyed the top levels of UK chess. Nearly 1,000 competed in the full British Chess Federation congress, which included over-60 and many junior title contests.

Short, taking part in the British championship for the first time since 1987, is at his best in flowing positional games. His opening round opponent's strategy assisted the GM as 10 Bxf6 and 16 Bxc4 conceded Short two ranging bishops ... the finish was swift, economical and elegant as exchange of queens opened up lines for Black's pieces.

A Smith v N Short

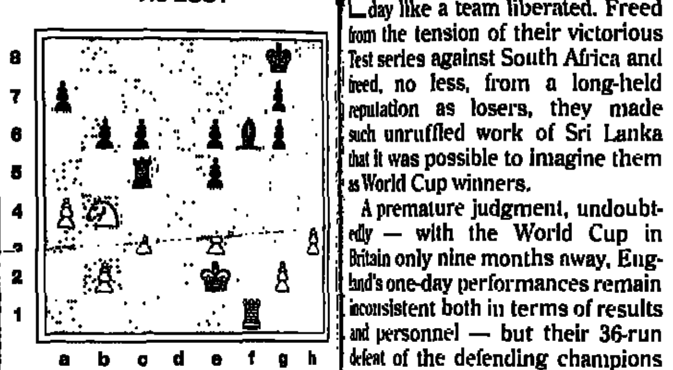
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 Be2 Nbd7 8 0-0 Be7 9 Qd3 h6 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 Rad1 0-0 12 Nb3 Be7 13 a4 Qc7 14 Kh1 Ne5 15 Qg3 Nc4 16 Bxc4 Qxc4 17 a5 Bd7 18 Rfe1 Rfd8 19 Rd4 Qc7 20 f4 Bc6 21 f5 Bf6 22 Rd3 Be5 23 Qh3 Re8 24 fxe6 fxe6 25 Rf3 Rac8 26 Ref1 Qd8 27 Qg4 Qg5! 28 Qxg5 hxg5 29 Nd2 d5 30 exd5 exd5 31 Rd3 d4 32 Nce4 Bb5 33 Nxg5 Rxc2 34 Resigns.

My Observer colleague Jon Speelman has a rare instinct for creating weaknesses in an opponent's game, then demolishing them with tactical blows. Here's a double rook offer; near the end White might have tried 27 Ka2 and if Rc3 28 exd4 h6(Rcb3? 29 Re8+) 29 Qf7.

B Kelly v J Speelman

1 d4 d6 2 c4 e5 3 Nf3 e4 4 Ng5 f5 5 Nc3 c6 6 f3 Be7 7 Nh3 Nf6 8 Bg5 0-0 9 e3 Na6 10 Qd2 Nc7 11 0-0-0 d5 12 cxd5? 12 Nf4 is logical to preserve tension. **Nfxd5! 13 Bxe7 Qxe7 14 Bc4 Be6 15 Nf2 Nxc3 16 Qxc3 exf3 17 gxf3 Bxc4 18 Qxc4+** Kh8 19 **Rde1 Nd5 20 Nd1 b5 21** Qe2 **c5! 22 Qxb5 Rfc8 23 Kb1** Rab8 **24 Qa5 cxd4! 25 Qxd5** Qc7 26 **a3 Qc2+ 27 Ka1? Rc3! 28** Ka2 **Rcb3! 29 Resigns.** If 29 Qxd4 Rxa3+!

No 2537



David Bronstein (Soviet Union) v Savielly Tartakover (France), Saltsjobaden interzonal 1948. Bronstein survived this final round, won the tournament and went on to challenge for the world title. At the start of the game he was level on points with Laszlo Szabo, and reached this diagram where White's active pieces offset Black's extra pawn.

Suddenly a Baltic States refugee approached the board and began to pummel Bronstein, shouting that the KGB had deported and murdered his family and that he wanted to kill all Russians. Play was suspended, but when they resumed Szabo, who had worked in a labour camp during the German occupation of Hungary, made several blunders in his own game while Bronstein found a winning coup.

The irony was that Bronstein's own father had also been exiled by Stalin's government, while Tartakover's family had died in a pogrom. What did White play, and why was Bronstein's move so strong?

No 2536: 1 N5g3 (threat 2 Qd7) Bc8 2 Qe5, or c4 2 bxc4, or Rxf6 2 Rd2. Traps are 1 Nd4? Rxf6 or 1 Ng7? Bb7 or 1 Nxg5? c4 or 1 Rc4? axb3.

Quick crossword no. 432

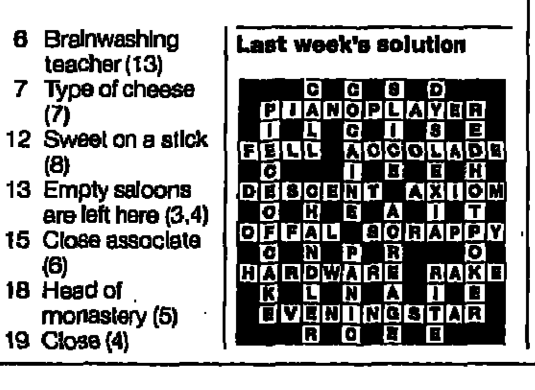
Across

1 Valetudinarian (10)
8 Move fast (3)
... (in the wake) (8)
11 LSD (4)
13 Cows etc (6)
14 (Cause of) intense fear (6)
16 Means of transport (4)
17 Asian island country (3,5)
20 About right for paddling in? (5,4)
21 Bath (3)
22 One with similar tastes and views (7,6)

Down

1 Mountain in the Bible (5)
2 Terrified (5-8)
3 Prance or dance — (easy one!) (8)
4 Woodwind player (6)
5 Uninteresting (4)
6 Brainwashing teacher (13)
7 Type of cheese (7)
12 Sweet on a stick (8)
13 Empty saloons are left here (3,4)
15 Close associate (6)
18 Head of monastery (5)
19 Close (4)

Last week's solution



Bridge Zia Mahmood

HAVE you ever wanted to go nine down vulnerable in a freely bid game? To put this another way ... National Championship, could arrive in a contract which he hoped would be defeated by nine tricks? This extraordinary fate befell Bobby Levin in the recent Spingold tournament, one of the most prestigious in the United States.

His team, captained by Richie Schwarz, started the final 16 boards of the Spingold semi-final with a healthy lead over the team captained by Grant Baze and containing four crack Polish professional players. When this deal arrived on the table, though, the Baze team had wiped out a substantial chunk of their arrears. Game all, dealer South: (see next column).

North
♠ 7
♥ K J 8 4
...

West
♠ 10 9 8 5 2
♥ A Q 9 7 5
♦ None
♣ 9 8 2

East
♠ A K Q 6 4 3
♥ 6 3
♦ 4
♣ A Q 10 5

South
♠ J
♥ 10 2
♦ K J 9 8 6 3 2
♣ K J 7

In the Open Room, North-South were Marcin Lesniewski and Marek Symanowski for the Baze team. East-West for Schwarz were Mark Lair and Ron Smith. The bidding was fast and furious.

South	West	North	East
Marcin	Lair	Marek	Smith
Pass	Pass	1♦	4♠
5♦	5♥	Dble	Pass
Pass	5♠	Pass	Pass
6♦	6♠	Pass	Pass
Dble	Pass	Pass	Pass

It was an auction where nobody was sure who could make what, and Mark Lair as West followed standard practice when he bid six spades. The distribution was obviously wild, so either six diamonds or six spades — or even both! — could prove a making contract. In practice, his decision turned out to be a losing one, for six spades doubled was defeated by a trick, and six diamonds had no chance at all. In the other room, though, this was the remarkable auction:

South	West	North	East
Winstein	Cezary	Levin	Adam
...			

South's three diamonds was a normal pre-empt, and North's three spades was an out-and-out bluff bid. East could not double, since this would be for takeout on his methods. When South raised to four spades, Adam Zmudzinski as East knew what was happening, but decided to take a lot of hundreds against four spades as opposed to an uncertain penalty against five diamonds.

When Levin saw the dummy, he had cause to hope. If he could go nine down in four spades undoubled, he would concede 900 — but his team mates might bring back 1430 from six spades bid and made at the other table. Unfortunately for him, the cards did not lie up favourably enough! He came to the same two tricks as the defenders had taken in the other room, and the 800 that he lost went with team mates' result of minus 200 to generate a swing of 14 IMPs to the Baze team. Since Baze subsequently won the match by a single IMP, it is possible that Levin may not try this particular ruse again for a while.

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Cricket

England find winning can work wonders

David Hopps at Lord's

ENGLAND performed last Sunday like a team liberated. Freed from the tension of their victorious Test series against South Africa and freed, no less, from a long-held reputation as losers, they made such unruffled work of Sri Lanka that it was possible to imagine them as World Cup winners.

A premature judgment, undoubtedly — with the World Cup in Britain only nine months away, England's one-day performances remain inconsistent both in terms of results and personnel — but their 36-run defeat of the defending champions in the Emirates' triangular tournament showed an upbeat mood which is worthy of preservation.

The South Africa series, compelling as it became, was one of unrelenting and exhausting tension. Last Sunday was a time for fiesta. The sun shone down upon a capacity Lord's crowd and England relished the chance to play attacking cricket.

Such a relaxed mood was ideal for Graeme Hick, who temporarily subdued his apprehension at an England career once again on the line. Hick had not made a one-day international 50 in his last 11 innings, and his presence in Australia this winter has been in doubt. But here he was utterly convincing, his 86 from 97 balls providing the bedrock of England's 247.

Alec Stewart, rousingly acclaimed for leading England to Test success, cracked a vigorous half-century before being bowled. However, Hick impressively pushed on, but England's expectations of a total of 290 disintegrated in the final seven overs when seven wickets fell for 24 runs.

A target of 248 did not sound out of Sri Lanka's range, but Peter Martin and Darren Gough swung and seamed the new ball more than the visitors might have been expecting. Sri Lanka had lost three wickets for 28 by the fifth over, and not because of any pinch-hitting excess — each batsman in turn pushing defensively.

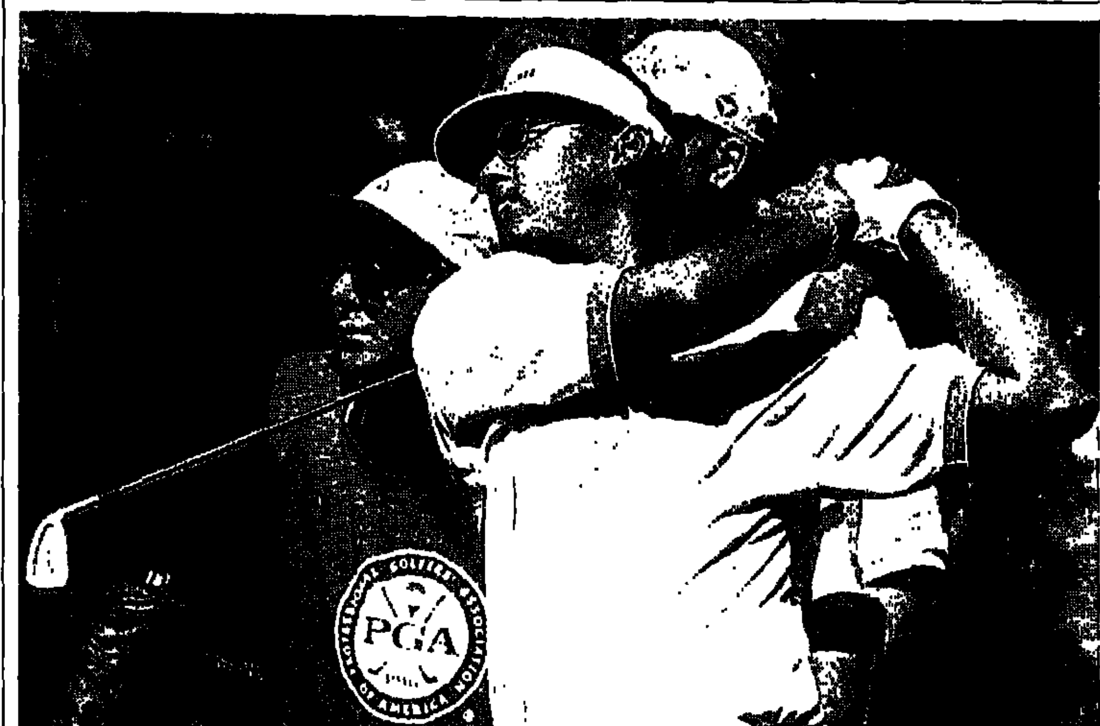
When Russel Arnold played on in Alan Mullally's first over, the onus once again rested with the two old stagers, Aravinda De Silva and Arjuna Ranatunga.

Ranatunga had suggested there was "no problem" with his home-spun bat sponsorship which at Trent Bridge on Friday had helped to beat South Africa by 57 runs and had advertised "Sam's Chicken and Ribs". Here, after discussions between the match referee and the Sri Lankan management, it simply read Sam's.

De Silva briefly left Martin speechless by his habit of pulling deliveries that Sanath Jayasuriya, for example, would consider carving off the front foot over the off-side, but Ian Austin won a marginal leg-before decision to claim a prized first international wicket.

Sri Lanka had abandoned all hope of victory long before Robert Croft bowled Ranatunga off a bottom edge. The match finished to mirthful cheers as Muttiah Muralitharan slashed Gough's shoulder-high full toss over cover for six, but his captain was not smiling.

Golf US PGA Championship



Off to a tee . . . Singh watches his drive take him a step closer to victory PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF HAYNES

Singh on song for first major

Mike Selvey in Seattle

VIJAY SINGH, joint leader with Steve Stricker by four strokes after the third round, held off a challenge from the American and 1995 champion Steve Elkington to win the US PGA Championship in a nerve-jangling finish at Sahalee Country Club.

Going to the final hole, the most difficult on the course, two strokes ahead of Stricker, Singh drove majestically to the middle of the fairway, then to the middle of the green and two putts were enough to give the Fijian a 68 and a nine-under total of 271 for his first major title.

The early standard had been set by Nick Price, one over at the start, who picked up a shot at the 2nd, had birdies at the 9th and 10th and an eagle at the 11th before parring his way in for a 65 — equalling Greg Kraft's course record — and a total of 276. His four-under mark was also achieved by Mark O'Meara and Frank Lickliter, who both shot 68s.

O'Meara had moved to within two shots of the lead with a 50-foot putt for an eagle at the long 2nd and a birdie at the par-three 5th, before falling back with dropped shots at the next three holes, so ending his dream.

Tiger Woods also played himself out of contention by dropping two shots on the front nine, and Davis Love III, attempting to become the first player in 61 years to win the title back-to-back, foundered in the water by the 5th green.

If the US PGA Championship has a history of producing first-time winners of major titles — 12 of the last 13, in fact, a sequence broken only by Price in 1994 — then Stricker and Singh would have begun their final rounds last Sunday as firm favourites to lift the Wanamaker Trophy.

Singh has long been regarded as a potential winner, and so had Stricker two years ago when he finished fourth in the money-list. However, he plummeted 126 places the following year. Here, Stricker was a form horse, having come into the championship on the back of four top-10 finishes in his last five events.

Despite Elkington's challenge, the contest over the back nine effectively came down to ding-dong matchplay between Stricker and Singh in which the Fijian had the final say.

● Sherri Steinhauer took 81 shots in the opening round of the Women's British Open at Lytham St Annes and for three days had a totally anonymous tournament. Last Sunday, though, she made up for that with a 12-shot improvement on her first effort, and her three-under-par 69, for a four-over-par total of 292, made her one of the tournaments more surprising winners.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Captain Cork bobs up to clinch a thriller

IN ONE of the closest finishes of recent times, Derbyshire reached the final of the NatWest Trophy by denying Leicestershire three runs off the last ball of the match at Grace Road. Chris Lewis's side seemed on course to reach their second final of the season when, chasing an imposing target of 299 for victory, they eased to 243-3. But the fall of three quick wickets broke their momentum and they folded on 295-6.

Earlier, the Derbyshire captain and man of the match, Dominic Cork, blasted an unbeaten 61 from 63 balls to lift his side to 298-7. Derbyshire's opponents at Lord's on September 5 will be Lancashire, who triumphed over Hampshire by 43 runs at Southampton, a stand of 116 between John Crawley and Neil Fairbrother providing the backbone of the visitors' 252 total.

Hampshire got off to a disastrous start, losing their top five batsmen for just 28 in 17 overs. Although Dimitri Mascarenhas repaired some of the damage with a gutsy 73, his efforts were ultimately in vain. It is the tenth time Lancashire have reached the final of the competition.

AMBITIOUS plans by Rugby Union chiefs to launch a British League consisting of 38 clubs have been put on hold, at least for this season, because of time constraints and a failure by the various groups involved to thrash out an agreement. It had been hoped that English and Welsh clubs, together with Edinburgh and Glasgow from Scotland, would take part in the project.

But Brian Baister, chairman of the Rugby Football Union management board, said: "We share the frustration of the clubs, unions, players and supporters that a cross-border competition cannot start this season. Talks will continue to consider the tournament next season."

A GOAL from Ryan Giggs in the first half and another by Andy Cole nine minutes from time enabled Manchester United to beat a well-organised LKS Lodz of Poland 2-0 at Old Trafford in the first leg of the second qualifying round of this season's European Cup. The victory, barring a disaster in the return match in Poland later this month, should be enough to assure Alex Ferguson's team of a place in the Champions League this season.

United appear to have done enough to complete the chore of having to qualify this time, which was their penance for finishing runners-up to Arsenal in the Premiership last season. In Scotland, Celtic defeated Croatia Zagreb 1-0, the only goal of the match coming from substitute Darren Jackson.

SEVEN Italian cyclists were expelled from the Tour of Portugal in the first three days of the race, after failing blood tests carried out by a medical team from the International Cycling Union.

Rugby Union

It's looking all black for All Blacks

Andy Colquhoun in Durban

NEW ZEALAND's rugby gloom deepened last Saturday when they surrendered an 18-point lead to lose 24-23 to South Africa in the Tri-Nations Championship, their fourth defeat in succession and their worst run since they lost six consecutive Tests in 1949.

The All Blacks fully deserved their 23-5 lead going into the final quarter and there seemed little chance of a lacklustre Springbok side escaping their fate.

But a typical darting break and try by the scrum-half Joost van der Westhuizen in the 68th minute, and a further try by the replacement flanker Bobby Skinstad four minutes later, closed the gap to four points as the previously ruthless All Black defence went to sleep.

With the match in stoppage time, the Springboks opted to kick a penalty to the corner and from the resulting line-out the hooker James Dalton was carried over by his pack for the winning try.

The New Zealand coach John Hart remained upbeat in defeat. "My faith in the All Blacks has never wavered. I'm proud to be associated with them," he said. "Our performance tonight proved we are a great side. We went out to attack the Springbok scrum, and I thought we out-scrummed them consistently.

"When our No 8 Isitolo Maka was taken out of the game it was a huge blow to us. We lost a lot of presence. We are hugely disappointed, but we have made a lot of progress from a few weeks ago."

Gary Teichmann, the Springbok captain, said: "It was a pretty big effort from us to win. It was sparked off by Joost's try. We needed someone to take the initiative. We played superb rugby in the last 15 minutes and it showed the character of the side."

The wing Stefan Terblanche had barged through the tackle of the full-back Christian Cullen for his seventh try in eight internationals to put South Africa 5-0 ahead in the third minute. However, a 40-metre break by Jonah Lomu set up the first All Black try for the scrum-half Justin Marshall before Maka powered through weak tackling to leave the way clear for captain Taine Randell's ninth Test try.

Andrew Mehrtens converted the two tries and also kicked three penalties on either side of half-time against a Springbok side diminished by indecision and mistakes. Yet South Africa finally came good for their 13th successive victory, whereas New Zealand will try to overcome their barren patch against Australia in two weeks' time.

South Africa lead the Tri-Nations table by three points from Australia, who can still claim the title if they win the final match of the series against the Springboks in Johannesburg on Saturday.

